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Chapter 1: Profile

Introduction

Georgia is a country of contradictions. It is the birthplace of one of history's most deadly dictators, Joseph Stalin, yet its people are known for their warmth and hospitality.¹ Greek mythology and orthodox Christianity have both influenced Georgia. Georgian identity is neither wholly European nor Asian nor homogenous. Many ethnic groups and languages fill Georgia's borders. Some trace their roots to the region's prehistoric tribes while others reflect foreign influence. Today Georgian society is deeply fractured, not only politically but also culturally.²



© Barbara Kaja Kaniewska
Georgian woman

Georgia lies between Europe and Asia. The Caucasus Mountains, traditionally the dividing line between the two continents, rise on Georgia's northern and southern borders, creating a cultural enclave on the shores of the Black Sea. Lying in the boundary between East and West, Georgia has found itself continually in the backyard of competing world powers. Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Persians, Turks, and Russians have all spread into Georgia, leaving distinct cultural influences. Georgia's history as a "jigsaw puzzle of small kingdoms" has been exacerbated through centuries of foreign influence.³ Even the country's name is evidence of foreign occupation. In its native language Georgia is called *Sakartvelo*, but the name "Georgia" (used by the outside world) came either from the term *Gurj*, (used by Persians and Arabs) or from the earlier Greek *geos*.⁴

Geography

Georgia's location and topography have been both beneficial and troublesome throughout its history. At the crossroads of Europe and Asia, the region has consistently been targeted by foreign empires. Despite many years of foreign rule, Georgia has retained a distinctive cultural identity because of its topographic features. The waters of the Black Sea and the mountains of the Greater and Lesser Caucasus have acted as natural borders, creating enclaves able to withstand foreign occupation.⁵



© Mikheil Samkharadze
The Chain of Banguriani

¹ Mark Elliott, *Azerbaijan, with Excursions to Georgia* (Hindhead, Surrey, England: Trailblazer Publications, 2001), 290.

² Richard Plunkett and Tom Master, *Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan* (Melbourne, Australia: Lonely Planet, 2004), 16.

³ Richard Plunkett and Tom Master, *Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan* (Melbourne, Australia: Lonely Planet, 2004), 25.

⁴ Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (New York: Odyssey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 14.

⁵ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 3.

Area

At 69,700 sq km (26,911 sq mi), Georgia is roughly the same size as the Republic of Ireland. The country shares a border of 723 km (449 mi) with Russia to the north. A coastline of 310 km (193 mi) along the Black Sea forms its western border. Georgia's southern border runs alongside Turkey in the west (252 km or 157 mi), Armenia in the middle (164 km or 102 mi), and Azerbaijan in the east. The border with Azerbaijan runs 322 km (200 mi) and curves northward to form Georgia's eastern boundary.⁶

Geographic Divisions and Climate

The Greater Caucasus Mountains of the north, the Lesser Caucasus of the south, and the coastal lowlands of the west comprise the country's main geographic divisions.⁷

The Greater Caucasus, which span the northern part of the country and form a natural border with Russia, are a series of high peaks and gorges. The highest mountains rise more than 5,000 m (16,000 ft) and are covered in snow even in the summer.⁸



© Mikheil Samkharadze
Sunset In Kazbek

Dense swampland once dominated the coastal lowlands, but a series of improvement projects in the early 20th century, including drainage canals and river embankments, have made the area a vital agricultural asset for Georgia.⁹ Rivers originating in the Caucasus crisscross the lowlands and empty into the Black Sea.¹⁰ The lowlands are warm, but the cool waters of the Black Sea ease the summer heat. In winter the Caucasus Mountains shield the lowlands from arctic cold.¹¹

The Lesser Caucasus, as their name implies, are not as steep as their northern cousins. They form a natural border with Georgia's southern neighbors.

The Kartli Plain, in the center of the country, lies between the two mountain ranges. The Likhi Mountain range, an extension of the Caucasus that connects the Greater with the Lesser Caucasus, forms a natural divide between the western and eastern regions of the country.¹² In the eastern part of the country, largely uninhabited, the mountains taper off into an area of river basins and plateaus.¹³

The climate varies greatly by region but is considered subtropical. East of the Likhi Mountains, the climate tends to be more continental.¹⁴

⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, "Georgia," in *The World Factbook*, 12 January 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html>

⁷ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 8.

⁸ Zoran Pavlović and Charles F. Gritzner, *Republic of Georgia* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002), 16.

⁹ Zoran Pavlović and Charles F. Gritzner, *Republic of Georgia* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002), 18.

¹⁰ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 10.

¹¹ Zoran Pavlović and Charles F. Gritzner, *Republic of Georgia* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002), 20.

¹² Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 11.

¹³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Georgia," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/230186/Georgia>

¹⁴ Zoran Pavlović and Charles F. Gritzner, *Republic of Georgia* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002), 20.

Rivers and Lakes

The Mt'k'vari River, also known as the Kura River, is the longest river in Transcaucasia. It originates in Turkey, runs through Georgia and Azerbaijan, and empties into the Caspian Sea.¹⁵ Georgia's capital city, T'bilisi, was founded on the banks of the Mt'k'vari. The Rioni River of Georgia's central lowlands is the country's second-longest river and in Greek mythology is the waterway traversed by Jason and the Argonauts in search of the Golden Fleece. The Inguri River in the northwest of the country forms a natural border for the autonomous region of Abkhazia. In addition to these and other shorter rivers, Georgia has more than 850 lakes.¹⁶



© Mikheil Samkharadze
Mount Kazbek

Major Cities

T'bilisi – T'bilisi is Georgia's capital and economic and cultural hub. Founded on the shores of the Mt'k'vari River more than 1,500 years ago, T'bilisi has outlasted foreign rulers from both Europe and Asia. The city reflects this diverse history and is, in many ways, a microcosm of the multiethnic nature of the country. Today more than a million people live in T'bilisi, which straddles both sides of the Mt'k'vari River and produces more than 35% of the country's industrial output.¹⁷ The city is also home to the country's major educational and scientific institutions.¹⁸



© Rita Willaert
T'bilisi

Kutaisi – Situated in the heart of the central lowlands, Kutaisi is Georgia's second-largest city. With a population of roughly 200,000, Kutaisi, in addition to being a center for coal mining and automotive industries, is also the country's western center for agriculture.¹⁹ Kutaisi's history dates back to a Greek colony in the 7th century B.C.E. According to legend, Kutaisi was the ancient home of the Golden Fleece and the adjacent Rioni River allowed Jason and his Argonauts to sail in from the Black Sea.²⁰

Batumi – Georgia's third-largest city is Batumi, the capital of the autonomous region of Ajaria. Batumi is a vibrant port city in the southwest. Though once sacked by the Turks, Batumi has rebounded to become an economic hub and center for regional tourism.²¹

¹⁵ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 11.

¹⁶ Richard Plunkett and Tom Master, *Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan* (Melbourne, Australia: Lonely Planet, 2004), 25.

¹⁷ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 13.

¹⁸ Zoran Pavlović and Charles F. Gritzner, *Republic of Georgia* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002), 90.

¹⁹ Zoran Pavlović and Charles F. Gritzner, *Republic of Georgia* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002), 91. Population estimates for Kutaisi vary from 188,000 (as cited in the CiP) to 240,000 in Spilling's *Cultures of the World: Georgia*.

²⁰ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 14.

²¹ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 14

Mtskheta – The small city of Mtskheta is in many ways the home of Georgian identity. Christianity was first brought to Georgia in Mtskheta, and the first document written in the alphabet of the Georgian language was written in this early administrative capital. The Georgian Orthodox Church is headquartered in Mtskheta, and UNESCO lists the city as a World Heritage Site.²²

Reflecting Georgia's long history, several of its cities have served as capitals of former Georgian kingdoms. Kutaisi was the capital of Georgia from the late 10th to the early 12th century.²³ Mtskheta was the capital of the kingdom of Kartli from 500 B.C.E to 500 C.E. Telavi, though a small city today, was once the capital of the kingdom of Kakhetia.²⁴ Furthermore, national identities are rooted in the capital cities of Georgia's self-declared independent provinces: Tskhinvali, the capital of South Ossetia, and Sokhumi, the capital of Abkhazia.

History

Competing Powers

Modern Georgian culture has been shaped by foreign powers vying for its territory over the centuries. The protection of the Caucasus Mountains and the fertile lowlands in Georgia appealed to settlers for millennia. By the 2nd century B.C.E., Georgia was inhabited by cattle-raising tribes proficient in metallurgy.²⁵ The Karli kingdom arose as peoples in the Mt'k'vari valley intermingled and accepted Christianity in 330 C.E. Competition for the region from Persian, Roman, Byzantine, Arab, and Mongol powers occurred in the centuries that followed.²⁶



© Mikheil Samkharadze
Ajaria

After the Ottomans captured Constantinople (present-day Istanbul) in 1453, Georgia was isolated from the western Christian world.²⁷ The Ottoman Turks and Safavid Persians of present-day Iran vied for power in Georgia for several centuries, and each group left its mark. Descendants of Georgians deported to Persia may still be found in Iran, and Ottoman influence may be seen in the Muslim populations of Georgia's Abkhazia and Ajaria regions. When the power of the Persians began to wane in the early 18th century, the Russian empire expanded. For much of the 18th century, Georgia was caught between competing foreign powers, but by 1801 Russia successfully incorporated Georgia into the empire.²⁸

Georgia's feudal system was replaced by Tsarist Russia. By the end of the 19th century radicals influenced by Karl Marx, among them Georgian-born Joseph Stalin, gained traction both in Georgia and throughout Russia. In 1917, after bitter fighting in World War I and economic

²² Zoran Pavlović and Charles F. Gritzner, *Republic of Georgia* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002), 90–91.

²³ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 14.

²⁴ Zoran Pavlović and Charles F. Gritzner, *Republic of Georgia* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002), 90.

²⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Georgia," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/230186/Georgia>

²⁶ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Georgia," 21 June 2010, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5253.htm>

²⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Georgia," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/230186/Georgia>

²⁸ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 26–27.

collapse in Russia, Bolshevik revolutionaries successfully overthrew the Tsar. Georgia claimed its independence in the anarchy of the revolution, but by 1921 Soviet forces took control of the country, and in 1936 Georgia officially became a Soviet republic.²⁹

Soviet Georgia and Independence

The Soviets brutally suppressed an early Georgian rebellion in 1924.³⁰ After Stalin came to power, he showed no favoritism toward his Georgian birthplace. Expressions of nationalism were quashed, and Moscow kept a close eye on the republic.³¹ Georgia's economy began to industrialize and improve, until the German army invaded in 1941. Although Germany was never successful in its occupation of Georgia, it is estimated that 10% of Georgia's population died during the war.³²



© Onnik Krikorian / Oneworld Multimedia 2008
Russian troops

After Stalin died in 1953, the USSR's repressive grip on Georgia began to loosen. Symbols of Georgian identity, such as language and literature, were once again promoted openly.³³ By the time Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev began reform, Georgian nationalism (long fomented through centuries of foreign rule) drove a referendum for independence.³⁴

Georgia declared its independence in April of 1991, an act that became legal when the Soviet Union officially disbanded later that year. Independence precipitated immediate internal opposition and civil conflict.³⁵ Ethnic minorities, nonparticipants in Georgia's newly realized nationalism, began pushing for secession in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and tens of thousands of Georgians were forcibly relocated.³⁶ The self-declared autonomous regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia have remained Georgia's primary domestic concerns. In 2004 Georgia's newly elected president, Mikheil Saakashvili, affirmed territorial unity in Georgia, prompting further hostilities in the autonomous regions. Tensions came to a head in August 2008 when Russian forces entered South Ossetia and supported separatist fighters in response to increased Georgian military action.³⁷ Although a cease-fire was declared, conflict has continued because Russia formally recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent nations. Georgia responded by withdrawing its membership from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), a regional organization of former Soviet nations, and continuing its campaign for membership in NATO.³⁸

²⁹Glenn L. Roberts, *Commissar and Mullah: Soviet-Muslim Policy from 1917 to 1924* (Boca Raton, FL: Dissertation.com, 2007), 146–147.

³⁰Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 222–225.

³¹Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Georgia," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/230186/Georgia>

³²Zoran Pavlović and Charles F. Gritzner, *Republic of Georgia* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002), 43.

³³Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Georgia," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/230186/Georgia>

³⁴Zoran Pavlović and Charles F. Gritzner, *Republic of Georgia* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002), 43.

³⁵Zoran Pavlović and Charles F. Gritzner, *Republic of Georgia* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002), 44.

³⁶Jonathan Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution: Delayed Transition in the Former Soviet Union*, Post-Soviet Politics Series (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 53–56.

³⁷Human Rights Watch, "Russia/Georgia: All Parties in August/South Ossetia Conflict Violated Laws of War," 23 January 2009, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/01/22/russiageorgia-all-parties-augustsouth-ossetia-conflict-violated-laws-war>

³⁸Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Georgia," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/230186/Georgia>

Government

Georgia's central government initially lacked stability but much of that volatility has abated. During Soviet rule, the Communist Party was the country's only legal political party. As the political sphere opened up in the late 1980s, many political parties emerged.³⁹ In 1991 an election was held for the country's first president. Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the winner, was overthrown in a violent coup after a year in office because he had adopted Soviet methods of governing. The military established a governing council, but stability was regained when Edward Shevardnadze, a former Soviet foreign minister, gained control of the council. Elections were held again in 1995, and Shevardnadze was elected president.⁴⁰ Although popular at first, Shevardnadze was pushed to resign in 2003 after protesters took to the streets, declaring their disgust over recent elections. Mikhail Saakashvili led the change in power that became known as the Rose Revolution. Early in the following year, Saakashvili was elected president.⁴¹



© Onnik Krikorian / Cneworld Multimedia 2008
President Mikheil Saakashvili

The president, elected to a maximum of two five-year terms, is the head of state and holds a great deal of authority.⁴² The legislative arm of the government is embodied in a one-house (unicameral) parliament consisting of 235 members, 85 of whom are elected in districts by a simple majority and the remainder elected on a proportional basis corresponding with the total votes received by any one party.⁴³ The judiciary consists of city and district courts and the Supreme Court.⁴⁴

Media

Georgia's constitution guarantees freedom of speech, and government policies tend to uphold this right. State-run radio and television have been replaced by a government-funded public broadcasting system. While print media has little readership, television viewership is high in Georgia. Criticism of government officials by journalists is common.⁴⁵ Most government involvement in the media stems from its complicated registration and licensing requirements. To ensure smooth relations with government officials, many journalists self-censor. Despite this self-censorship, Georgia is regarded as having the greatest degree of press freedom among former Soviet republics.⁴⁶



© M-J Miloy
Media tower in Tbilisi

³⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Georgia," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/230186/Georgia>

⁴⁰ Zoran Pavlović and Charles F. Gritzner, *Republic of Georgia* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002), 64–65.

⁴¹ Frederik Coene, *The Caucasus: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2010), 38.

⁴² Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Georgia," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/230186/Georgia>

⁴³ Margaret Kaeter, *The Caucasian Republics* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), 109–110.

⁴⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Georgia," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/230186/Georgia>

⁴⁵ BBC News, "Georgia Country Profile," 1 December 2010, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/1102477.stm#media

⁴⁶ Virginia Davis Nordin, "Georgia Press, Media, TV, Radio, Newspapers," Press Reference, 2011, <http://www.pressreference.com/Fa-Gu/Georgia.html>

Economy

Georgia's economy has changed drastically since independence. Under Soviet rule, every aspect of the economy was controlled by Moscow. The government controlled and owned agriculture and industry, and also set the prices of goods and services.^{47,48} Although the region was one of the Soviet Union's most profitable republics, after independence the economy of Georgia contracted severely. It is estimated that real GDP declined 70% between 1990 and 1994.⁴⁹ The political instability of those early years along with unrest in Abkhazia and South Ossetia were major contributing factors to the declining economy. Additionally, political changes in the region brought complications to long-established trading relationships.⁵⁰



Courtesy of Wikipedia
Georgian twenty lari note

Reforms during the early 21st century were created to entice foreign investment, overcome the detrimental effects of the Russian economic crisis of the late 1990s, and eradicate corruption. The government has significantly reduced its citizens' tax burden and limited regulations on businesses.⁵¹

Today Georgia's economy is rooted in both agriculture and industry and has been buoyed by aid from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).^{52, 53} Since independence, farmers have begun diversifying from the former Soviet one-crop (monocrop) management system. The subtropical climate of the lowlands yields nearly year-round crop production of tea and citrus fruits. Although the industrial sector has not rebounded nearly as quickly (in 2004 production was still less than 25% of capacity pre-independence), skilled workers from Soviet-era airplane manufacturing have applied their skills in the automotive sector.⁵⁴

⁴⁷ Zoran Pavlović and Charles F. Gritzner, *Republic of Georgia* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002), 64–69.

⁴⁸ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 46.

⁴⁹ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Georgia," 21 June 2010, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5253.htm>

⁵⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Georgia," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/230186/Georgia>

⁵¹ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Georgia," 21 June 2010, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5253.htm>

⁵² Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Georgia," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/230186/Georgia>

⁵³ Margaret Kaeter, *The Caucasian Republics* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), 115.

⁵⁴ Margaret Kaeter, *The Caucasian Republics* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), 116–117.

Ethnic Groups and Languages

Georgia's mountainous terrain has allowed for the preservation of multiple ethnic identities. Roughly 70% to 80% of the population is ethnically Georgian, while the remaining population includes more than 80 other nationalities.⁵⁵



© Barbara Kaja Kaniewska
Elderly Georgian woman

Georgia's ethnic minorities include Armenians, Russians, Azeris, Ossetians, Greeks, and Abkhazians. Georgia's Russian, Azeri, and Armenian populations are largely transplanted from neighboring countries. The Abkhazians inhabit the autonomous region of Abkhazia in the country's northwest but are a minority, even in their own region.⁵⁶ In contrast, the Ossetians are the majority population in South Ossetia.^{57,58} The Ajarians of Georgia's southwest autonomous region (Ajaria) are largely Muslim, as are the Abkhazians and Ossetians; however, the Ajarians are ethnically Georgian.⁵⁹

Georgia is not only ethnically but also linguistically diverse. Georgian is not part of the Indo-European language family but rather the smaller Ibero-Caucasian language group.⁶⁰ Its lack of connection to any neighboring languages suggests that it grew as an indigenous language in the Caucasus.⁶¹ Regional dialects are plentiful, as are minority languages such as Russian, Armenian, Ossetian (all belong to the Indo-European language family), Azeri (a Turkic language), and Abkhaz (another Caucasian language).^{62, 63, 64} Other languages are found throughout the country, especially in Georgia's mountainous areas, where the population of speakers of a particular language may number only several thousand.⁶⁵

⁵⁵ Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (Hong Kong: Odyssey, 1999), 30. The CIA World Factbook cites the Georgian population at 83.9% of the population while Encyclopædia Britannica supports Rosen's figure of 70%. The discrepancy appears to come from the inclusion or exclusion of certain minority populations within the larger Georgian population.

⁵⁶ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 57.

⁵⁷ Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (Hong Kong: Odyssey, 1999), 31.

⁵⁸ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 58.

⁵⁹ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 56.

⁶⁰ Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (Hong Kong: Odyssey, 1999), 73.

⁶¹ Roger D. Woodard, *The Ancient Languages of Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 4
http://books.google.com/books?id=J-f_jwCgmeUC&pg=PA4#

⁶² Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Georgia," 21 June 2010,
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5253.htm>

⁶³ Central Intelligence Agency, "Georgia," in *The World Factbook*, 12 January 2011,
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html>

⁶⁴ Tim Burford, *Georgia with Armenia: The Bradt Travel Guide* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press Inc, 2002), 43.

⁶⁵ Paul M. Lewis, *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 16th ed., (Dallas: SIL International, 2009),
http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=GE

Chapter 1: Assessments

1. Georgia has a long history of foreign occupation.

True

Lying at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, Georgia has fallen under the rule of many foreign empires. Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Persians, Turks, and Russians have all left their influences.

2. Georgia's name comes from the foreign term (either the Arab and Persian term *Gurj* or the Greek term *geos*) for the region.

True

Native Georgians know their country as *Sakartvelo* but the name known to the rest of the world comes from foreign influence. The country's name does not come from its patron saint, Saint George, as is sometimes reported.

3. Georgia is a completely flat country made up of plains and small rolling hills.

False

The Greater Caucasus Mountains of the north and the Lesser Caucasus of the south are Georgia's most dominant topographic features. They greatly influence the climate of the country and have been instrumental in protecting Georgia's unique culture.

4. Joseph Stalin, the brutal Soviet dictator, was a native-born Georgian.

True

Stalin, whose surname was originally Jughashvili, was born in the Georgian city of Gori in 1878. He was influenced at an early age by the philosophy of Karl Marx and joined Vladimir Lenin's Bolsheviks after being expelled from a Georgian Orthodox seminary.

5. Georgia gained independence from the Soviet Union through a referendum in 1991.

True

Georgia declared independence in April of 1991 and was recognized when the Soviet Union fell later the same year. Internal opposition and civil conflict accompanied independence, especially in the self-declared autonomous regions.

Chapter 2: Religion

Overview

Georgia's identity is in many ways tied to its Christian history, though Georgian society is not uniform in its religious observances. The country's religious landscape has been notably shaped by Persian, Turkish, and Russian influences. In the capital city of T'bilisi, for example, within a 15-minute walk one may find a Georgian Orthodox basilica, an Armenian church, a Muslim mosque, a Jewish synagogue, and a Zoroastrian temple.⁶⁶



© Matt Gross
14th century monastery

In the early fourth century C.E., Christianity became the official religion of the Georgian kingdom.⁶⁷ This early conversion profoundly affected Georgia and its people. Despite many centuries of foreign rule, Georgia retained a distinct religious identity that remains vibrant. Additionally, Georgia's religion prompted it to retain a westward orientation even when foreign empires cut it off from the rest of the West.⁶⁸ During Soviet rule in the 20th century, Georgian nationalism was in many ways tied to Georgian Orthodoxy. The importance of Christianity in Georgian identity is expressed in a statement by the head of the Georgian Orthodox Church who exclaimed "What would Georgia be without Christianity?!... Our soul is by nature a Christian one."⁶⁹ While this statement does not acknowledge secular or minority religious elements in the country, it highlights a major aspect of Georgian history and culture.

⁶⁶ Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (New York: Odyssey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 13.

⁶⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Georgian Orthodox Church," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/230317/Georgian-Orthodox-church>

⁶⁸ Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (New York: Odyssey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 28.

⁶⁹ Pedro Ramet, ed., *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), 187.

Major Religions

Georgian Orthodox Church

According to tradition, Christianity was brought to Georgia by a woman (later known as Saint Nino) who gained the Queen of Kartli's confidence by curing her of an unknown illness. The queen's husband converted after he was enshrouded with darkness while hunting and prayed to the Christian God for deliverance.⁷⁰ As the religion spread, it replaced Greek paganism in the west and Persian Zoroastrianism in the east of the country.⁷¹ The local church quickly became autonomous and remains one of the oldest Christian denominations in the world.⁷²



Courtesy of Wikipedia
Depiction of foundation of
Georgian Orthodox Church

The Georgian Orthodox Church is an independent (autocephalous) branch of the Eastern Orthodox Church. The Eastern Orthodox Church has more than a dozen independent arms, the most well-known being the Russian and Greek Orthodox churches.⁷³ Like other Eastern churches that split from western Christianity in the 11th century, the Georgian church does not recognize the authority of the Catholic Pope. Its religious practice includes rituals such as burning incense and praying before important icons. Georgian is the typical language of church services.⁷⁴

The Georgian Cross, identified by its downward-angled arms, is a prominent national icon. Legend has it that this unusual shape comes from Saint Nino who, when entering Georgia for the first time, fashioned a cross using vine branches and strands of her own hair.⁷⁵ Icons of Saint George, the country's patron saint, are also common. Saint George, a martyred Roman soldier from the third century CE, is typically depicted clad in armor, slaying a dragon.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 71–72.

⁷¹ Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (New York: Odyssey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 28.

⁷² Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Georgian Orthodox Church," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/230317/Georgian-Orthodox-church>

⁷³ Ronald G. Roberson, "The Orthodox Church of Georgia," CNEWA United States, 19 June 2007, <http://www.cnewa.us/default.aspx?ID=21&pagetypeID=9&sitecode=US&pageno=1>

⁷⁴ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 72–73.

⁷⁵ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 75.

⁷⁶ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 73.

Russian Orthodox Church

Christianity came to Russia much later than in Georgia, but the Russian branch grew substantially because of its empire.⁷⁷ After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, many began to see Russia as the “Third Rome” and its leaders as defenders of the faith.⁷⁸ The Russian Orthodox Church remains the largest of all the Eastern churches, with adherents throughout the former Russian Empire. Only about 10% of Georgians are Russian Orthodox.⁷⁹



Courtesy of Wikipedia
Painting of the siege of Constantinople

Armenian Apostolic Church

Founded at the beginning of the fourth century, the Armenian Apostolic Church is much older than the Georgian Orthodox Church.⁸⁰ Although it geographically neighbors churches of the Eastern Orthodox family, the Armenian Church split from the others in the 6th century and has remained independent since.⁸¹ Georgia’s population of Apostolic Armenians is the largest outside of Armenia. Their churches are decorated simply and often have ostrich eggs suspended from the ceiling to signify hope and resurrection.⁸²

Islam

Although Georgia is primarily Christian, many of its neighbors, including Turkey, Azerbaijan, and the Caucasus region of Russia, are predominantly Muslim. Georgia, too, has its own Muslim population. The minority populations of Georgia’s self-declared autonomous republics of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Ajaria are largely Muslim, as is Georgia’s Azeri population. While most of the country’s Muslims follow the dominant Sunni sect, the Azeris are primarily Shi’ite.⁸³

Other religions

Georgia has small populations of Protestant Christians and some Catholics. Jehovah’s Witnesses and other nontraditional congregations in the country have been the target of persecution and attacks.^{84,85} Additionally, the country has for centuries had a small Jewish community, although much of that population migrated to Israel in recent decades.⁸⁶

⁷⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Russian Orthodox Church,” 2011,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513815/Russian-Orthodox-church>

⁷⁸ Ronald G. Roberson, “The Orthodox Church of Russia,” CNEWA United States, 19 June 2007,

<http://www.cnewa.us/default.aspx?ID=17&pagetypeID=9&sitecode=US&pageno=1>

⁷⁹ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 75.

⁸⁰ Ronald G. Roberson, “The Armenian Apostolic Church,” CNEWA United States, 26 June 2008,

<http://www.cnewa.us/default.aspx?ID=5&pagetypeID=9&sitecode=US&pageno=1>

⁸¹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Armenian Apostolic Church,” 2011,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/35284/Armenian-Apostolic-Church>

⁸² Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 76.

⁸³ Tim Burford, *Georgia with Armenia: The Bradt Travel Guide* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press Inc, 2002), 41.

⁸⁴ Tim Burford, *Georgia with Armenia: The Bradt Travel Guide* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press Inc, 2002), 45.

⁸⁵ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S.State Department, “2001 Report on International Religious Freedom,” December 2001, 275, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/9001.pdf>

⁸⁶ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 77.

Role of Religion in Government

Georgia's shift away from Soviet rule affected religious expression in the country. During the Soviet years the government condemned religion and religious organizations. Soviet officials accused churches of exploitation and feared institutions outside of government control.⁸⁷

Although the Georgian Orthodox Church received less government repression than other Orthodox churches, many Georgian churches were destroyed or turned into concert halls or museums.^{88,89}

When Georgia gained independence, it enshrined "complete freedom of belief and religion" in its constitution but also noted the "special role" of the Georgian Orthodox Church "in the history of Georgia." The Orthodox Church receives special tax exemptions, and a constitutional agreement known as a concordat further strengthened the bond between the state and the Georgian Orthodox Church. This agreement allows the church to be granted permits for the use of official state symbols and for the production and distribution of worship articles.⁹⁰ The line between church and state appears blurred at times. The Ministry of Education, for example, has reportedly prevented the distribution of textbooks that did not pay significant homage to the Georgian Orthodox Church.⁹¹



© Rita Wilaert
Nun at Ninotsminda

Religion in Daily Life

Since achieving independence from the Soviets in 1991, the role of religion in daily life has grown considerably. Although membership and activity in the Georgian Orthodox Church has increased, many people identify with the Church without regularly attending worship services.⁹² This cultural identification manifests itself in many ways; for example Georgians commonly cross themselves three times whenever they see a church, even if they are not regular church-goers.⁹³



© Trygve Utstumo
Inside Mtskheta cathedral

Despite Georgia's political troubles with the self-declared autonomous regions that are predominantly Muslim, the conflicts have not been framed as religious. Georgia's Muslim population does not actively promote a religious identity. The Ajarians of the southwest emerged from Soviet rule far less observant in their religion than they had been decades before. Today

⁸⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/614785/Union-of-Soviet-Socialist-Republics/42047/Culture-and-religion-under-communism>

⁸⁸ Margaret Kaeter, *The Caucasian Republics* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), 121.

⁸⁹ Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (New York: Odyssey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 29.

⁹⁰ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. State Department, "Georgia: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices," 23 February 2004, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27838.htm>

⁹¹ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. State Department, "2001 Report on International Religious Freedom," December 2001, 276, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/9001.pdf>

⁹² Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. State Department, "2001 Report on International Religious Freedom," December 2001, 275, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/9001.pdf>

⁹³ Richard Plunkett and Tom Masters, *Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan* (Melbourne, Australia: Lonely Planet, 2004), 28.

few attend mosques, and fasting during the month of Ramadan is rare.⁹⁴ The Azeri population of the south is Shi'ite Muslim, but unlike Azerbaijan's Shi'ite neighbor Iran, the Azeris are not known for their devotion to faith.⁹⁵

Religious Holidays

All major feasts of the Orthodox calendar are observed.. Easter is the most important of all festivals. Other feasts include The Feast of Saint Basil the Great celebrated on January 1, Christmas celebrated on January 7, and Ascension Day, which occurs 40 days after Easter.^{96,97}



© Mikheil Samkharadze
Aliilo Christmas march

Some celebrations are Georgia-specific and go beyond the Orthodox calendar used by many Eastern churches. Saint Nino is honored in May for her role in bringing Christianity to Georgia. Later in the year, on October 14, Georgians celebrate the historic role of the city of Mtskheta in Georgian Orthodoxy. The city continues to be the home of the Georgian Orthodox Church and is regarded as one of the most sacred places in the country. Georgians from all over the country fill the small city during the festival. Entertainment in town accompanies a procession led by the church's patriarch around the cathedral. Finally, a holiday on November 23 honors Saint George as both a religious and national figure.⁹⁸

Georgia's Muslim population celebrates the two major feasts of Islam. *Eid al-Fitr*, the lesser of the two, commemorates the end of Ramadan, Islam's month of daytime fasting. *Eid al-Adha*, the feast of the sacrifice, commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son to God and coincides with the yearly pilgrimage to Mecca. Because Islam's calendar is lunar, the dates of these festivals shift every year.

Buildings of Worship

Christian churches dot Georgia's landscape. Some of its older basilicas have a distinctive triple-church style, found only in Georgia. In this style the two side naves are separated from the central hall by walls and the only access to each side is through doors. Later churches reflect various styles including the central-domed churches common to Greece, brick churches with geometric patterns inspired by Persian influence, and 19th-century Russian neoclassicism.⁹⁹ Churches are often decorated inside with candles, pictures depicting religious



© Joe Coyle
Inside Sameba church, Tbilisi

⁹⁴ Everyculture, "Adjarians," n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/wc/Costa-Rica-to-Georgia/Adjarians.html>

⁹⁵ Tim Burford, *Georgia with Armenia: The Bradt Travel Guide* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press Inc, 2002), 41.

⁹⁶ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 110.

⁹⁷ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 110.

⁹⁸ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 111.

⁹⁹ Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (New York: Odyssey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 35–37.

events, and other icons.¹⁰⁰

Behavior in Places of Worship

The Georgian Orthodox Church shares the practices common to Orthodox Christian churches, and expects behavior in its buildings similar to other conservative Christian traditions.¹⁰¹ One may find contribution boxes inside older churches intended for church upkeep. Visitor donations are greatly appreciated, as are the giving of alms to poor widows dressed in black who congregate outside the church.¹⁰²



© Joe Coyle
St. Mary's church, Batumi

Exchange 1: May I enter the church?

Visitor:	May I enter the church?	meh eklesiyashi shesvla shemidzleeyaa?
Local:	Yes.	kay

Modesty is important as a symbol of respect to God while in a Georgian church. Men should remove hats or other head coverings, but women should cover their heads when entering a church.

Exchange 2: Do I need to cover my head?

Visitor (female):	Do I need to cover my head?	tavzey Ramey unda daaveepaaRo?
Local:	Yes.	kay

Georgia's Orthodox Churches are centers for prayer throughout the week. Services outside of the traditional Sabbath include baptisms, weddings, and weekday liturgies.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Terry Cowan, "Georgian Church Etiquette," Virtual Tourist, 7 July 2006, <http://members.virtualltourist.com/m/tt/8079c/>

¹⁰¹ Ronald G. Roberson, "The Orthodox Church," CNEWA United States, 2 January 2007, <http://www.cnewa.us/default.aspx?ID=11&pagetypeID=9&sitecode=US&pageno=1>

¹⁰² Terry Cowan, "Georgian Church Etiquette," Virtual Tourist, 7 July 2006, <http://members.virtualltourist.com/m/tt/8079c/>

¹⁰³ Terry Cowan, "Georgian Church Etiquette," Virtual Tourist, 7 July 2006, <http://members.virtualltourist.com/m/tt/8079c/>

Exchange 3: When do you go to church?

Visitor:	When do you go to church?	eklesiyashi Rodis mideeKhaaR?
Local:	On Sunday.	kveeRaas

Georgia's churches, some more than a thousand years old, are a popular destination for visitors. Although many provide striking images, both inside and out, it is best to ask permission before taking photographs. Photography should be avoided during church services.

Exchange 4: May I take photographs inside the church?

Visitor:	May I take photographs inside the church?	eklesiyashi suRaatebis gadagheba shaydzlebaa?
Local:	Yes.	kay

Chapter 2: Assessments

1. Christianity arrived in Georgia when the Russian Empire expanded.

False

Christianity came to Georgia in the early fourth century, long before it made its way to Russia.

2. The Georgian Orthodox Church does not accept the authority of the Catholic pope.

True

The Georgian Orthodox Church, like other Orthodox churches, split from western Christianity in the eleventh century.

3. The Georgian Orthodox Church is a subset of the Greek Orthodox Church.

False

The Georgian Orthodox Church, like the Greek Orthodox Church, is an independent branch of the Eastern Church.

4. Georgia's Armenian population is known for its Muslim identity.

False

Armenians are primarily Christians and belong to the Armenian Apostolic Church, which has even earlier roots than the Georgian Orthodox Church. The population of Apostolic Armenians in Georgia is the largest outside of Armenia.

5. The Georgian constitution guarantees religious freedom.

True

Although the Georgian Orthodox Church receives special recognition from the state, religious freedom is legally guaranteed. This principle has been tested in the face of persecution endured by nontraditional religions since independence.

Chapter 3: Traditions

Introduction

Traditional Georgian honor and values are embodied in two of its national symbols: an epic poem written eight centuries ago, and a monumental statue erected in the mid-20th century.

Although most countries have a national anthem, few have a national epic poem. Shota Rustaveli's *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* is not only regarded as Georgia's greatest poem but also a source for lessons of virtue and chivalry reflected in the culture to this day.^{104,105} The poem's admonition that "Everything you give away remains yours and everything you keep is lost forever" permeates Georgia's national character and is expressed through traditional hospitality and kindness. According to the poem, a person's worth is found not in his worldly goods but in the number of his friends.¹⁰⁶ The importance of friendship and its relationship to hospitality may be seen in the Georgian word for friend, *megobari*, which literally refers to one who has eaten from the same bowl.¹⁰⁷



© Ddohler / flickr.com
Statue of Mother Georgia over Tbilisi

Georgian hospitality is also represented by a newer national symbol: the statue of Mother Georgia. She overlooks T'bilisi, welcoming guests with a bowl of wine in one hand. In her other hand, she holds a drawn sword as a warning against her enemies.¹⁰⁸ Thus, she stands as a reminder that although Georgia is welcoming, its hospitality does not extend to foreign domination.

Formulaic Codes of Politeness

Personal relationships are important to Georgians.¹⁰⁹ When greeting one another, both men and women commonly kiss each other on the cheek. Shaking hands is also common, especially among men.¹¹⁰ Handshakes are the standard greeting for those who have not met before.¹¹¹



© Vladimir Shioshvili
Vendor selling peppers

¹⁰⁴ Zoran Pavlović and Charles F. Gritzner, *Republic of Georgia* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002), 57.

¹⁰⁵ Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (New York: Odyssey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 19.

¹⁰⁶ Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (New York: Odyssey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 31–32.

¹⁰⁷ Darra Goldstein, *The Georgian Feast: The Vibrant Culture and Savory Food of the Republic of Georgia* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2003), xviii.

¹⁰⁸ Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 55.

¹⁰⁹ Kwintessential, "Georgia – Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette," n.d., <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/georgia.html>

¹¹⁰ Everyculture, "Georgia," n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Georgia.html>

¹¹¹ Kwintessential, "Georgia – Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette," n.d., <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/georgia.html>

Exchange 5: Good morning!

Visitor:	Good morning!	deelaa mshveedobeesaa!
Local:	Good morning to you!	deelaa mshveedobeesaa!

Individuals who know each other well will likely speak at a closer distance than those who are unacquainted with one another.¹¹² First names are reserved for family and close friends, while last names with appropriate titles are a mark of respect for others. Last names should be used unless directed otherwise.¹¹³

Exchange 6: Hi, Giorgi! (Informal)

Visitor:	Hi, Giorgi!	gaamaaRjoba, baatono geeyoRgee
Local:	Hello!	gaamaaRjoba!
Visitor:	Are you doing well?	Khom kaaRgad KhaRt?
Local:	Yes.	kay

In formal situations, such as in business meetings, introductions occur in order of seniority, but women may be given preference and introduced first.

Hospitality and Gift Giving

Hospitality is a hallmark of Georgian culture. Guests to the country are likely to be invited for a meal and will hold a special place of honor and respect at the feast.¹¹⁴ This hospitality is a direct result of the Georgian concept of friendship which is viewed as a great virtue.¹¹⁵



© Vladimir Shioshvili
Showing hospitality

Exchange 7: Thank you for your hospitality.

Guest:	Thank you for your hospitality.	deedee maadloba gaamaspindzlebistvis
Host:	You are welcome.	aaRaapRis

¹¹² Everyculture, "Georgia," n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Georgia.html>

¹¹³ Kwintessential, "Georgia – Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette," n.d., <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/georgia.html>

¹¹⁴ Council for International Exchange of Scholars, "Georgia: Culture and Custom," Institute of International Education, n.d., <http://www.cies.org/country/georgia.htm>

¹¹⁵ Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (New York: Odyssey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 31.

Visitors to a Georgian home may bring flowers or sweets as a gift for their hosts. When giving flowers, give an odd number; even numbers of flowers are offered at funerals. Gifts are also given to Georgians on birthdays and Christmas, and on “name days,” which are holidays celebrated in honor of saints on their birthdays.¹¹⁶

Eating Customs

The ultimate expression of Georgian culture is its feasts. The male head of the household acts as host while his wife or daughters prepare and serve the food.¹¹⁷ The women in the kitchen may not even have the time to join everyone at the dinner table.¹¹⁸

Wine has a prominent place at the Georgian table.¹¹⁹ Viticulture in the region is thousands of years old, and Georgia grows hundreds of varieties of grapes.¹²⁰ Some scholars think that winemaking originated in Georgia and later spread to other parts of the world.¹²¹ Wine is common at lunch and dinner and is consumed in great quantities, but drunkenness is seen as a social stigma and an insult to one’s host or guests. Manliness in Georgia is equated with one’s ability to drink large amounts of wine without becoming intoxicated. Women are not expected to keep pace with the men.¹²²



© Ddohler / flickr.com
Georgian feast

A line from Georgia’s epic tale, *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin*, expresses the cultural importance of feasting: “Spending on feasting and wine is better than hoarding our substance.”¹²³ A visitor at a Georgian meal will not leave hungry because many different dishes will cover the table.¹²⁴

Exchange 8: The food tastes so good.

Guest:	The food tastes so good.	kvelafeRi gemReeleeyaa
Host:	I’m glad you like it.	meeKhaaReeyaa, Rom mogtsont

¹¹⁶ Kwintessential, “Georgia – Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette,” n.d., <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/georgia.html>

¹¹⁷ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 116.

¹¹⁸ Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (New York: Odyssey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 77.

¹¹⁹ Zoran Pavlović and Charles F. Gritzner, *Republic of Georgia* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002), 59.

¹²⁰ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 121.

¹²¹ Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (New York: Odyssey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 81.

¹²² Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (New York: Odyssey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 85.

¹²³ Darra Goldstein, *The Georgian Feast: The Vibrant Culture and Savory Food of the Republic of Georgia* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2003), 26.

¹²⁴ Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (New York: Odyssey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 77.

The Georgian diet relies heavily on vegetables and a wide variety of herbs. Beef, lamb, and pork—luxuries once reserved for feast days—are now commonly eaten.¹²⁵



© Brankinha / flickr.com
Shish kebab

Exchange 9: What type of meat is this?

Guest:	What type of meat is this?	es Risee KhoRtseeeya?
Host:	Pork.	ghoRee

Georgian shish kebab, known as *mtsvadi*, is the most common type of grilled food in the country. Lamb, beef, or pork is skewered and grilled with vegetables. The meat may be grilled fresh or marinated overnight.¹²⁶

Exchange 10: What is the name of this dish?

Guest:	What is the name of this dish?	aam keRdzs Ra a kveeyaa?
Host:	This is mtsvadi.	es chabastuRmebuli mtsvadeeeya

Georgian dumplings, known as *khinkali*, are popular throughout the country. The dumplings are made from tender dough surrounding seasoned meat or cheese. The filling is encased by bringing the dough together into a topknot. When eating, the dumpling is held by the doughy topknot, but the knot itself is not consumed. The quality of a dumpling is based not only on its flavor but also the number of pleats in the dough.¹²⁷



© rugbyxm / flickr.com
Plate of khinkali

¹²⁵ Darra Goldstein, *The Georgian Feast: The Vibrant Culture and Savory Food of the Republic of Georgia* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2003), 36.

¹²⁶ Darra Goldstein, *The Georgian Feast: The Vibrant Culture and Savory Food of the Republic of Georgia* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2003), 84.

¹²⁷ Darra Goldstein, *The Georgian Feast: The Vibrant Culture and Savory Food of the Republic of Georgia* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2003), 114.

Exchange 11: What ingredients are used to make Georgian dumplings?

Guest:	What ingredients are used to make Georgian dumplings [khinkali]?	Ritee ketdeba Khinkaalee?
Host:	Spiced meat, onions, and garlic.	sunelebit, KhoRtsit, KhaaKhvit daa neevRit

In an interesting testament to foreign influences in the region that are not yet fully understood, many aspects of Georgian cuisine bear a striking resemblance to the cooking of Northern India. Clay ovens, cast-iron skillets, curry spice blends, and some culinary terms are similar in the two regions.¹²⁸

Supra

The *supra* is an evening-long meal characterized by continuous servings of food and long, elaborate toasts.¹²⁹ A *supra* may commemorate a holiday such as Easter or a significant life event such as a wedding or funeral. A *supra* may also be convened for no reason other than to eat good food with friends and guests.¹³⁰



© Susan Astray
Toast with Georgian wine

The offering of toasts is an important part of the evening meal.¹³¹ Entire glasses of wine are consumed after an individual toast, and sipping or drinking-out-of-turn is inappropriate. A toastmaster, known as a *tamada*, is not only responsible for directing the toasts of the evening but also for ensuring that the entire meal runs smoothly.¹³² The *tamada* is especially valued for his wit and eloquence in addition to his ability to improvise as the evening progresses and is “part ringmaster, part comedian, part storyteller, and part referee.”^{133,134} Toasts are made to family, friends and visitors.¹³⁵ Visitors should only add their own toasts under the direction of the *tamada*.¹³⁶ As one observer noted, “At least at the feast table, every Georgian is a

¹²⁸ Darra Goldstein, *The Georgian Feast: The Vibrant Culture and Savory Food of the Republic of Georgia* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2003), 36.

¹²⁹ Margaret Kaeter, *The Caucasian Republics* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), 127.

¹³⁰ Cuttino Alexander, “The Rules of the Supra,” *Cuttino’s Georgian Life: A Journal of my Peace Corps Service in the Republic of Georgia, 2006-2008*, 11 April 2007, <http://cuttinoalexander.blogspot.com/2007/04/rules-of-supra-11.html>

¹³¹ Zoran Pavlović and Charles F. Gritzner, *Republic of Georgia* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002), 59.

¹³² Richard Plunkett and Tom Master, *Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan* (Lonely Planet, 2004), 31.

¹³³ Darra Goldstein, *The Georgian Feast: The Vibrant Culture and Savory Food of the Republic of Georgia* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2003), 26-27.

¹³⁴ Cuttino Alexander, “The Rules of the Supra,” *Cuttino’s Georgian Life: A Journal of my Peace Corps Service in the Republic of Georgia, 2006–2008*, 11 April 2007, <http://cuttinoalexander.blogspot.com/2007/04/rules-of-supra-11.html>

¹³⁵ Darra Goldstein, *The Georgian Feast: The Vibrant Culture and Savory Food of the Republic of Georgia* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2003), 26–27.

¹³⁶ Richard Plunkett and Tom Master, *Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan* (Lonely Planet, 2004), 31.

poet, and competition can turn the meal into a celebration not only of the occasion but of the oratory art.”¹³⁷

Dress Codes

Everyday clothing is highly westernized and similar to clothing worn in Russia and other former Soviet Republics. Trousers and button-down shirts are common, as are business suits. In rural areas and among older people, colors tend to be more muted and conservative than in Western European countries.^{138,139}

Georgian men often wear a traditional tunic known as a *cherkeska* for festivals or other celebrations. The *cherkeska* reaches the knees and is accompanied by high, soft leather boots. Cylindrical cases for ammunition cartridges are sewn into both sides of the tunic’s chest, and a short, narrow knife worn around the waist is also common. Woolen hats complete the traditional uniform. Traditional dress for women comes in a variety of colors, and is often ornately decorated with silver chains and accompanied with a headscarf.¹⁴⁰



© ritington / flickr.com
Traditional Cherkeska

Non-religious Celebrations

A number of civil holidays are recognized in Georgia. Georgians celebrate their independence every year on May 26. This commemorates the day in 1918 when Georgia declared its independence from the Russian Empire after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. This is not related to their 1991 referendum declaring independence from the Soviet Union. Independence Day is celebrated with parades and displays of military strength.¹⁴¹

A major folk festival known as *Tbilisoba* is held every year in T’bilisi at the end of October. It is a celebration not only of the country’s capital city but of Georgian life as a whole.¹⁴² Celebrations include a street carnival, traditional dances and songs, street performances, craft fairs, and many other activities.^{143,144}



© National Gallery of Art
Painting of St. George

St. George’s Day, a commemoration of the country’s patron saint,

¹³⁷ Darra Goldstein, *The Georgian Feast: The Vibrant Culture and Savory Food of the Republic of Georgia* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2003), 27.

¹³⁸ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999).

¹³⁹ Margaret Kaeter, *The Caucasian Republics* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004).

¹⁴⁰ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 59.

¹⁴¹ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 113.

¹⁴² Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (New York: Odyssey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 87.

¹⁴³ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 112.

¹⁴⁴ Salome Kobalava, “In Expectation of Tbilisoba 2010,” *Georgia Today*, 15 October 2010,

http://www.georgiatoday.ge/article_details.php?id=8364

occurs every year on November 23.¹⁴⁵ The day is known as *Giorgoba* in Georgia and is a national holiday during which schools are closed. Many commemorate the bravery of Saint George by attending a church service and having a large feast in his honor.¹⁴⁶

Exchange 12: Happy St. George's Day!

Visitor:	Happy St. George's Day!	geeyoRgobas geelotsavt!
Local:	May St. George bless you!	tsminda geeyoRgis maadlee aaR mogeeshaalot ghmeRtmaa!

Dos and Don'ts

Do

Do maintain eye contact during greetings.

Do wait for a woman to initiate a handshake.

Do address others by their surname until invited to use their first name.

Do hold the knife in your right hand and the fork in your left hand when eating.

Do finish the food on your plate and accept additional helpings when offered.

Don't

Don't disregard the role of the toastmaster at a meal.

Don't hide your hands when eating or rest your elbows on the table.

Don't toast with beer; beer is only used to toast enemies.

Don't enter a church dressed immodestly.

Don't take pictures at a church without asking permission.

¹⁴⁵ Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (New York: Odyssey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 90.

¹⁴⁶ Karina Rajtar, "Giorgoba (St. George's Day) – Georgia," Academic Year Program, 23 November 2010, <http://nacelayp.com/2010/11/23/giorgoba-georgia/>

Chapter 3: Assessments

1. The statue of Mother Georgia that overlooks T'bilisi stands as both an expression of hospitality and a warning.

True

In her left hand, she holds a bowl of wine symbolizing the welcoming nature of Georgia's people, but in her right hand, she holds a drawn sword as a warning to Georgia's enemies.

2. Last names are almost never used. One should use only first names unless invited otherwise.

False

First names are used only among close friends and family. One should use appropriate titles and last names when referring to others, unless directed otherwise.

3. It is considered rude to bring a present to a Georgian home when invited as a guest.

False

Gifts such as sweets or an odd number of flowers are common gifts when visiting a Georgian home and are considered polite appreciation of hospitality.

4. At a Georgian meal women will often stay confined to traditional roles of cooking and serving.

True

Women traditionally cook the meal and will serve the many dishes that accompany a Georgian feast. Because of the demands of serving a feast, women may not even have time to sit and participate at the table.

5. Although consuming vast amounts of wine is considered manly, displays of drunkenness are inappropriate.

True

Drunken displays are unseemly. It is the toastmaster's responsibility to slow down the toasts if he sees that the guests at his table are becoming visibly intoxicated.

Chapter 4: Urban Life

Urbanization

Fifty-three percent of the Georgian population lives in a city.¹⁴⁷ T'bilisi, the country's capital, is by far the largest city, and at more than a million residents, accounts for roughly a quarter of the country's total populace. Few areas in the cities are newly built. Economic strains since independence in the early 1990s have precluded any new construction or public works projects. Most buildings during the Soviet years, a period of industrialization and urban growth, followed the Soviet architectural model of flat surfaces that display little creativity.¹⁴⁸



© Brankinha / flickr.com
Apartments, Batumi

Urban Work Issues

Georgians have a word – *blat* – for bending the rules, which comes from the Russian word meaning “pull” or “connections.” The term grew out of the restrictive communist system and connotes anything from patronage to fraud. Its continued usage since independence signifies the corruption and black-market trading found in Georgia's cities.¹⁴⁹ To get around arbitrarily enforced laws, a great deal of business occurs “off-the-books.” This “gray” economy accounts for 80% of the country's total output.¹⁵⁰

Although it is common to see women working in Georgia's cities, there is still gender segregation in certain fields. Women rarely work in law enforcement or the military. Government remains largely a “boys' club,” especially in top-level positions. In the private sector, influential and lucrative business opportunities remain firmly in the male sphere.¹⁵¹ According to a 2009 estimate, unemployment in Georgia is 16.4%.¹⁵²

Consistent and reliable energy has become an issue that affects work life in Georgia's cities. Prior to independence, Georgia received energy from other republics within the Soviet Union. Once Georgia became responsible for meeting its own energy needs, costs went up and access became less reliable.¹⁵³ The rationing of gas and electricity arose after independence, and resulting blackouts have become a nuisance to Georgian business.^{154,155}

¹⁴⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, “Georgia,” in *The World Factbook*, 12 January 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html>

¹⁴⁸ Everyculture, “Georgia – Urbanism, Architecture, and the Use of Space,” n. d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Georgia.html>

¹⁴⁹ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 69.

¹⁵⁰ David L. Phillips, “Stability, Security, and Sovereignty in the Republic of Georgia,” The Council on Foreign Relations, Center for Preventive Action, 15 January 2004, 11, <http://www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/Georgia.pdf>

¹⁵¹ Everyculture, “Georgia – Gender Roles and Statuses,” n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Georgia.html>

¹⁵² Central Intelligence Agency, “Georgia,” in *The World Factbook*, 12 January 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html>

¹⁵³ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 50.

¹⁵⁴ Margaret Kaeter, *The Caucasian Republics*, (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), 129.

Daily Urban Life

Most housing in the city is expensive and consists of small apartments. When extended families are not living under the same roof, they tend to live in close proximity, usually in a neighborhood that is ethnically and religiously uniform. Basic services such as heating are not consistent, and water and energy shortages are common. Textile factories and canneries are regular employers in the cities, and many urban women work outside the home at least part time.¹⁵⁶



© rugbyxrn / flickr.com
Apartments, T'bilisi

Strolling the streets of the city is a popular after-work activity. During the evenings, especially in T'bilisi, the streets are alive with conversation, music, and games. Cafés are popular and shops remain open late. Evening social activities are especially common for younger population of Georgia's cities.¹⁵⁷

T'bilisi is famous for its hot springs. The city's name is a derivative of the word *tbili*, meaning "warm," and refers not to the summer climate but rather to the area's hot sulfur baths.¹⁵⁸ Locals appreciate the restorative effects of the waters, and often make use of the baths to relax or to receive a body massage.¹⁵⁹

Urban Health Care

Health care in Georgia not only falls below European standards but also those of other former Soviet countries. Nonetheless, Georgia's cities, particularly T'bilisi, Kutaisi, and Batumi, fare better than the rest of the country in terms of health care access.¹⁶⁰ Health care costs in Georgia are often prohibitive because out-of-pocket expenses account for more than 70% of costs, compared to an average of 40% in former Soviet republics and 20% in the European Union.^{161,162}



© Brankintha / flickr.com
Homeless person, Batumi

¹⁵⁵ David L. Phillips, "Stability, Security, and Sovereignty in the Republic of Georgia," *The Council on Foreign Relations*, Center for Preventive Action, 15 January 2004, 14,

<http://www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/Georgia.pdf>

¹⁵⁶ Margaret Kaeter, *The Caucasian Republics* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), 128–129.

¹⁵⁷ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 62.

¹⁵⁸ Tim Burford, *Georgia with Armenia: The Bradt Travel Guide* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press Inc, 2002), 87.

¹⁵⁹ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 107.

¹⁶⁰ Bureau of Consular Affairs, United States Department of State, "Georgia–Country Specific Information, Medical Facilities and Health Information" 19 January 2011,

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1122.html#medical

¹⁶¹ Xiaohui Hou and Shiyao Chao, "An Evaluation of the Initial Impact of the Medical Assistance Program for the Poor in Georgia," *The World Bank*, Europe and Central Asia Region, Human Development Department and South Caucasus Country Department, April 2008, 3,

http://www.wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/IW3P/IB/2008/04/14/000158349_20080414101557/Rendered/PDF/wps4588.pdf

¹⁶² Several sources, including Encyclopædia Britannica, declare that public funds provide free health care in Georgia. Although the country originally held this policy in the initial years following independence, it quickly fell apart, and policies were changed by the mid-1990s.

Following independence in the early 1990s, the healthcare system in Georgia was in crisis. The per capita expenditure on healthcare dropped from approximately 13 USD in 1991 to less than 1 USD in 1994. This significantly affected healthcare infrastructure and medical indicators such as life expectancy. The government did not begin serious reform until 2006, when it announced that it would expand healthcare access by partnering with the private sector and further tapping into the public budget. The reforms especially targeted Georgia's poor. According to the Life in Transition Survey conducted by the World Bank in the Europe and Central Asia Region, some progress has been made "...to improve the poor's access to and utilization of health services...", although much remains to be done.¹⁶³

Pharmacies are easy to find in T'bilisi and provide prescription and over-the-counter drugs.¹⁶⁴

Exchange 13: Is there a hospital nearby?

Visitor:	Is there a hospital nearby?	aak aaKhlos saavadmkofo aaRees?
Local:	Yes, in the center of town.	kay, kaalaakees tsentRshee

Exchange 14: Is Dr. Mchedishvili in, sir?

Visitor:	Is Dr. Mchedishvili in, sir?	ekeemi mtchedlishveelee aak aaRaees?
Local:	No.	aaRa

Education

Education has always been important in Georgia. The country had the most highly educated population in the Soviet Union during the 20th century, and this legacy continues today.¹⁶⁵ According to 2004 estimates, 100% of the Georgian population is literate, meaning that the entire population over the age of 15 can read and write.¹⁶⁶ Literacy in Georgia is not necessarily limited to Georgian, the country's official language, because much of the population speaks more than one language.¹⁶⁷



© Joe Coyle
Urban classroom

¹⁶³ Xiaohui Hou and Shiyan Chao, "An Evaluation of the Initial Impact of the Medical Assistance Program for the Poor in Georgia," The World Bank, Europe and Central Asia Region, Human Development Department and South Caucasus Country Department, April 2008, 1, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/IW3P/IB/2008/04/14/000158349_20080414101557/Rendered/PDF/wps4588.pdf

¹⁶⁴ Tim Burford, *Georgia with Armenia: The Bradt Travel Guide* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press Inc, 2002), 63.

¹⁶⁵ Margaret Kaeter, *The Caucasian Republics* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), 108

¹⁶⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, "Georgia," in *The World Factbook*, 12 January 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html>

¹⁶⁷ Margaret Kaeter, *The Caucasian Republics* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), 108.

The basic structure of Georgia’s education system resembles western models. Primary school consists of nine years of education; the first six in elementary school and the next three in what is known as basic school. Secondary school follows and is usually three years. It is in secondary school that the system is divided between traditional secondary school and vocational and technical secondary schools (some of which are only two years). Higher education follows a number of tracks as well, with higher vocational schools continuing from secondary school.¹⁶⁸

T’bilisi is the home of the country’s major institutions of higher education. The T’bilisi State University and the Academy of Science are the country’s most important ones.¹⁶⁹

Public Places

Restaurants

Although Georgia is renowned for its hospitable home cooking, one can easily find restaurants in major cities. Some serve traditional Georgian cuisine while others cater to European tastes.¹⁷⁰ Some restaurants still follow the Soviet style and serve plain dishes with little variety.¹⁷¹



© azkid2it / flickr.com
Table at restaurant

A salty mineral water known as Borjomi has been a national favorite since the beginning of the Soviet era; it is said to carry the curative properties of the Borjomi springs. A non-salty variety is also available.¹⁷²

Exchange 15: May I have a glass of water?

Customer:	May I have a glass of water?	eRtee tchikaa tskaalee daamaaleveenet too shaydzlebaa?
Waiter:	Yes, sir!	kay, baatono!

Breakfast is the most difficult meal to order in restaurants. Some establishments serve staples such as eggs and bread, but most simply offer *khachapuri*, a popular, local cheese bread.¹⁷³ When eating at home, fried leftover dumplings served with yogurt is popular for breakfast as are fruits preserved in syrup.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁸ Hasan Huseynli, Tamar Karchava, and Ann M. Koenig, “Azerbaijan and the Republic of Georgia: A New Century of Education in the Caucasus Region,” (AACRAO 96th Annual Meeting, New Orleans, 2010, 10), http://handouts.aacrao.org/am10/finished/F0500p_A_Koenig.pdf

¹⁶⁹ Zoran Pavlović and Charles F. Gritzner, *Republic of Georgia* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002), 90.

¹⁷⁰ Richard Plunkett and Tom Master, *Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan* (Lonely Planet, 2004), 46–47.

¹⁷¹ Tim Burford, *Georgia with Armenia: The Bradt Travel Guide* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press Inc, 2002), 75.

¹⁷² Richard Plunkett and Tom Master, *Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan* (Lonely Planet, 2004), 30.

¹⁷³ Richard Plunkett and Tom Master, *Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan* (Lonely Planet, 2004), 30.

¹⁷⁴ Darra Goldstein, *The Georgian Feast: The Vibrant Culture and Savory Food of the Republic of Georgia* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2003), 144, 178.

Exchange 16: Are you still serving breakfast?

Customer:	Are you still serving breakfast?	saawzmis tchaama isev shaydzlebaa?
Waiter:	Yes.	kay

Many desserts in Georgia, such as baklava, are not specific to the country and reflect long foreign influence in the area. Walnuts and fruit are very popular desserts.¹⁷⁵

Exchange 17: Do you have dessert?

Customer:	Do you have dessert?	deseRtee gaakvt?
Waiter:	Yes, we have cake, fruit, and nuts.	kay, gwaaks naamtsKhvaaRi, Khelee daa gozinaakee

A spicy soup known as *kharcho* and stews made of lamb, beef, or liver are common meals.¹⁷⁶



© lbán / flickr.com
Beef stew

Exchange 18: I'd like some hot soup.

Customer:	I'd like some hot soup.	tsKhelee soopee momitaanet too shaydzlebaa
Waiter:	Okay.	kaaRgeet

Green tea grown in Georgia's western lowlands is a popular drink, as is strong Turkish coffee.¹⁷⁷

Exchange 19: I would like coffee or tea.

Customer:	I would like coffee or tea.	k-haawa an chaay meendaa too shaydzlebaa
Waiter:	Sure.	Raa tkma unda

Bills in Georgian restaurants are not split among the various diners. One person, usually a man, picks up the tab.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Tim Burford, *Georgia with Armenia: The Bradt Travel Guide* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press Inc, 2002), 74.

¹⁷⁶ Tim Burford, *Georgia with Armenia: The Bradt Travel Guide* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press Inc, 2002), 73.

¹⁷⁷ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999)

Exchange 20: Put this all on one bill, okay?

Customer:	Put this all on one bill, okay?	es kvelapeRi chekshee shemikwaaneet, kaaRgeet?
Waiter:	Okay.	kaaRgeet

Marketplace

T'bilisi, a very large city, has a number of markets. The main market features high quality at high prices. Other markets include a large flea market and an open-air flower market.¹⁷⁹ The short narrow dagger, known as a *khandzali* and worn with traditional Georgian clothing, is a favorite visitor purchase. Other items include carpets, ceramics, and crafts made from wood and metal.¹⁸⁰ Drinking horns are also common souvenirs.¹⁸¹



© Joe Coyle
Marketplace, Batumi

Exchange 21: Is the market [bazari] nearby?

Visitor:	Is the market [bazari] nearby?	saadamey aaKhlos baazaaRee aaRees?
Local:	Yes, over there on the right.	kay aay ik, tkvens maRdzevniv

Items of national dress are also popular souvenirs. The traditional tunic with cartridge holders sewn in the chest, and the sheepskin cape worn in the mountains are especially common.¹⁸²

Exchange 22: Do you sell traditional Georgian hats?

Buyer:	Do you sell traditional Georgian hats?	tRaadits-oolee kaRtoolee koodebee gaakvt?
Seller:	No.	aaRa

¹⁷⁸ Tim Burford, *Georgia with Armenia: The Bradt Travel Guide* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press Inc, 2002), 83.

¹⁷⁹ Tim Burford, *Georgia with Armenia: The Bradt Travel Guide* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press Inc, 2002), 113.

¹⁸⁰ Tim Burford, *Georgia with Armenia: The Bradt Travel Guide* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press Inc, 2002), 79.

¹⁸¹ Tim Burford, *Georgia with Armenia: The Bradt Travel Guide* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press Inc, 2002), 114.

¹⁸² Tim Burford, *Georgia with Armenia: The Bradt Travel Guide* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press Inc, 2002), 79.

Bargaining in markets is possible. An experienced market haggler can expect to save roughly 30% off the initial price.¹⁸³



© Susan Astray
Vendors at a rest stop

Exchange 23: Can I buy a hat with this much money?

Buyer:	Can I buy a hat with this much money?	aam taanKhit shaydzlebaa maati kidva?
Seller:	No.	aaRa

Shops tend to stay open late in Georgia. Large shops will usually be open until 10 p.m., and small kiosks may stay open until midnight or later.¹⁸⁴

Exchange 24: How much longer will you be here?

Buyer:	How much longer will you be here?	kidev Raamdenee Khaanee iknebeet aak?
Seller:	Three more hours.	kidev sami saati

Although counterfeit goods are widely available, visitors should avoid them. Purchasing pirated or counterfeit goods may violate Georgian law.¹⁸⁵

Exchange 25: Please, buy something from me.

Seller:	Please, buy something from me.	gtKhovt chemtvis Ramey ikeedot
Buyer:	Sorry, I have no money left.	bodishee, maagRam pulee aghaaR makvs

Currency exchange is easy to find in T’bilisi, and black-market deals offer little advantage.¹⁸⁶

Exchange 26: Do you accept U.S. currency?

Buyer:	Do you accept U.S. currency?	dolaRs aayighebt?
Seller:	No, we only accept Lari.	aaRa, chven mKholod laaRebs

¹⁸³ Tim Burford, *Georgia with Armenia: The Bradt Travel Guide* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press Inc, 2002), 67.

¹⁸⁴ Tim Burford, *Georgia with Armenia: The Bradt Travel Guide* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press Inc, 2002), 67.

¹⁸⁵ Bureau of Consular Affairs, United States Department of State, “Georgia–Country Specific Information, Crime” 19 January 2011, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1122.html#crime

¹⁸⁶ Richard Plunkett and Tom Master, *Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan* (Lonely Planet, 2004), 37.

Urban Traffic and Transportation

Buses, trolleys, trains, and cars all serve Georgia’s cities, though in many cases travel can be slow and frustrating. T’bilisi also has a two-line metro with trains that run every five to ten minutes.¹⁸⁷



© Joe Coyle
Streets of Tbilisi

Georgian drivers tend to ignore traffic regulations. High-speeds and reckless driving mean that visiting drivers should be extremely cautious. Poor maintenance affects both road conditions and traffic lights.¹⁸⁸

Exchange 27: Is there a good auto mechanic nearby?

Visitor:	Is there a good auto mechanic nearby?	aak saadamey maankaanis kaaRgee Khelosaanee aaRees?
Local:	Yes.	kay

Official taxis, usually red, are often the only taxis with fare meters.¹⁸⁹

Exchange 28: Can you take me there?

Visitor:	Can you take me there?	shegidzleeyet tsaamikvaanot?
Local:	Yes, I can.	kay, shemidzleeyaa

Roadside tankers are just as popular for refueling a car as standard gas stations, especially outside cities. Black-market gas may be diluted with water to increase profits.¹⁹⁰

Exchange 29: Is there a gas station nearby?

Visitor:	Is there a gas station nearby?	saadmey aaKhlos kalonka aaRees?
Local:	Yes.	kay

The train system in Georgia has suffered from neglect and disrepair. Trains tend to be slow and frequently run behind schedule.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Tim Burford, *Georgia with Armenia: The Bradt Travel Guide* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press Inc, 2002), 67–70, 92.

¹⁸⁸ Bureau of Consular Affairs, United States Department of State, “Georgia–Country Specific Information, Traffic Safety and Road Conditions,” 19 January 2011, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1122.html#traffic_safety

¹⁸⁹ Richard Plunkett and Tom Master, *Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan* (Lonely Planet, 2004), 41.

¹⁹⁰ Tim Burford, *Georgia with Armenia: The Bradt Travel Guide* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press Inc, 2002), 68.

¹⁹¹ Tim Burford, *Georgia with Armenia: The Bradt Travel Guide* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press Inc, 2002), 68.

Exchange 30: Is there a train station nearby?

Visitor:	Is there a train station nearby?	saadmey aKhlos maataaReblis saadguRi aaRees?
Local:	Yes.	kay

Georgian Airlines, although small, has relatively new aircraft and high standards. Its flights, however, are primarily international.¹⁹²

Exchange 31: Is this airline safe for domestic travel?

Visitor:	Is this airline safe for domestic travel?	aadgilobRivee fRenebistvis aam aaveeyaaKhaazebit mgzaavRobaa oosaapRtKho- aa?
Local:	Yes, of course.	kay, Ra tkma unda

Car rentals are not common in Georgia unless one hires a driver as well.¹⁹³



Exchange 32: Where can I rent a car?

Visitor:	Where can I rent a car?	saad shaydzlebaa vikeeRaa-o maankanaa?
Local:	By the square.	skveRtaan

Although buses in the city are slow, they are quite inexpensive.¹⁹⁴ Buses are also the only above-ground public transportation to go through the city center of T'bilisi (trams and trolleys do not).¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Richard Plunkett and Tom Master, *Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan* (Melbourne, Australia: Lonely Planet, 2004), 261–262.

¹⁹³ Tim Burford, *Georgia with Armenia: The Bradt Travel Guide* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press Inc, 2002), 68.

¹⁹⁴ Tim Burford, *Georgia with Armenia: The Bradt Travel Guide* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press Inc, 2002), 70.

¹⁹⁵ Richard Plunkett and Tom Master, *Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan* (Melbourne, Australia: Lonely Planet, 2004), 50.

Exchange 33: Will the bus be here soon?

Visitor:	Will the bus be here soon?	aavtoboossee maaley movaa?
Local:	Yes.	kay

Pay phones are plentiful in Georgia's cities, but usually do not allow international dialing.¹⁹⁶

Exchange 34: Do you have a telephone?

Visitor:	Do you have a telephone?	teleponee gaavt?
Local:	Yes, the number is 8 22 65 79 13.	kay, chemee nomeReeyaa Rwaa, ots-daa-oRee, saamots- daa-Khootee, saamotsdaa- Khaamatee, tsaamete

Street Crime

Petty theft is a serious problem in Georgia's cities. Crimes of opportunity such as cell phone theft and purse snatching are common, as are more serious crimes. Easy access to firearms for Georgia's criminals means that armed robbery is also prevalent.¹⁹⁷ Foreigners have been targets of vicious muggings in Georgia's cities, especially at night in poorly lit areas.¹⁹⁸ Public transport minivans are also common targets for petty theft. The U.S. State Department advises travelers to use only reputable public transport companies and to travel during daylight hours.¹⁹⁹ It also advises U.S. citizens to avoid the political demonstrations common in T'bilisi because tensions can quickly escalate.²⁰⁰ The cities within the self-declared autonomous regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia are outside the control of the central government, and crime in these areas is very high.²⁰¹



© Vladimir Shioshvili
Vendor reading money

¹⁹⁶ Richard Plunkett and Tom Master, *Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan* (Melbourne, Australia: Lonely Planet, 2004), 37.

¹⁹⁷ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. State Department, "Georgia—Country Specific Information, Crime" 19 January 2011, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1122.html#crime

¹⁹⁸ Tim Burford, *Georgia with Armenia: The Bradt Travel Guide* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press Inc, 2002), 66.

¹⁹⁹ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. State Department, "Georgia—Country Specific Information, Crime" 19 January 2011, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1122.html#crime

²⁰⁰ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. State Department, "Georgia—Country Specific Information, Crime" 19 January 2011, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1122.html#safety

²⁰¹ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. State Department, "Georgia—Country Specific Information, Crime" 19 January 2011, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1122.html#safety

Chapter 4: Assessments

1. A great deal of building construction has occurred in Georgia's cities since it gained independence in 1991.

False

Economic strains have limited urban development. Most buildings were built in the Soviet period.

2. Since gaining independence in 1991, Georgia has struggled to meet its energy needs.

True

Prior to independence Georgia received energy from other Soviet republics, but since 1991 energy rationing and blackouts have been common.

3. The streets of Georgia's cities are nearly deserted in the evenings because of late work schedules.

False

The streets are alive with activity in the evenings including music, games, and simple conversation. Cafés are a popular meeting point and remain open late.

4. Free health care is provided to all residents.

False

Georgians face very high out-of-pocket expenses for their health care; therefore, few can take advantage of the scarce health care resources the country has.

5. Virtually the entire population of Georgia is literate.

True

According to 2004 estimates, 100% of the Georgian population is literate, although not all read and write the official language (Georgian).

Chapter 5: Rural Life

Introduction

Georgians regard their land very highly. According to a common folktale, when God distributed land to the peoples of the earth, the Georgians were busy celebrating. They soon discovered that there was no land left, and told God they had missed the allocation because they were busy praising him. God was pleased and gave Georgians the best land in the world, land that he had intended to keep for himself.^{202,203}



© Mikheil Samkharadze
Sighnaghi

Many of Georgia's iconic images are found in rural settings. The stone watchtowers over the small villages of northwest Georgia are one of the country's most enduring treasures.²⁰⁴ The vineyards of Georgia's eastern Kakheti region have been producing wine for centuries. Monasteries and churches more than a thousand years old dot the hilltops of the country. Life in these areas continues to be shaped both by traditions of the past and by recent political and economic developments.

Land Ownership

Georgia's agricultural and land distribution scheme have been upended since the country gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. During the Soviet years, the country's agricultural sector was run like much of the rest of the republics with all supply and demand decisions made by central authorities. Large government-run collective farms were devoted to producing a single crop.²⁰⁵



© Henning / flickr.com
Farming, Ushguli

After independence, the country moved away from the Soviet model of a state-planned economy.²⁰⁶ The Georgian government initiated a land individualization policy in 1992 to give farmers control of their farms. Individualization decentralized the ownership of land, either through privatization or leasing. Small family farms tend to be privately owned while medium- and large-sized farms often occupy leased land.²⁰⁷

Exchange 35: Do you own this land?

Official:	Do you own this land?	es mitsaa tkveneeyaa?
Local:	Yes.	kay

²⁰² Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus*, (New York: Odyssey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 14.

²⁰³ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 101.

²⁰⁴ Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (New York: Odyssey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 188.

²⁰⁵ Margaret Kaeter, *The Caucasian Republics* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), 116.

²⁰⁶ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 46.

²⁰⁷ Joseph Gogodze, Iddo Kan, and Ayal Kimli, "Land Reform and Rural Well Being in the Republic of Georgia: 1996–2003," The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, The Center for Agricultural Economic Research, The Department of Agricultural Economics and Management, (Discussion Paper No. 1.07, January 2007, 2–3), <http://ideas.repec.org/p/ags/huaedp/7168.html>

Land privatization has brought with it crop diversification. Farmers now grow multiple crops, not just one as they did in the Soviet system.²⁰⁸

Exchange 36: What crops do you grow?

Official:	What crops do you grow?	Raa mosaavalee mogkaavt?
Local:	I grow potatoes, grapes, and apples.	momkaavs kaRtofilee, kuRdzenee da vaashlee

Ethnic Distribution

The majority of Georgia is filled with ethnic Georgians, but they are not a uniform group. Several ethnic subgroups are prominent in some of the country’s rural areas.

Russians and early Soviets classified Georgia’s Mingrelian population as distinct from Georgians, but since the 1930s Mingrelians have been recognized as ethnically Georgian.²⁰⁹ Mingrelians, noted for their blond hair and blue eyes, speak another Caucasian language



© Henning / flickr.com
Georgian peasants

related to Georgian. But because there are substantial differences in languages, speakers of one language cannot understand speakers of the other.^{210, 211} The majority of Mingrelians still live in rural settlements, unlike most Georgians.²¹² Mingrelians today occupy much of the coastal lowlands in western Georgia, and many were displaced because of conflict in Abkhazia. Tea cultivation has made many Mingrelians rich.²¹³

The Svans are another Georgian ethnic subgroup who, like the Mingrelians, have been recognized as Georgian since the 1930s.²¹⁴ The Svan language, related to Georgian and Mingrelian, is oral and not written.²¹⁵ Svans now self-identify as Georgian. They live almost entirely in the territory of Svaneti, which borders Abkhazia to the west and Russia to the north. This region is mountainous and rugged.²¹⁶ Their villages tend to be commune-like, made up of a

²⁰⁸ Margaret Kaeter, *The Caucasian Republics* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), 116.

²⁰⁹ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 54.

²¹⁰ Everyculture, “Mingrelians - Orientation,” n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Russia-Eurasia-China/Mingrelians-Orientation.html>

²¹¹ Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (New York: Odyssey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 240.

²¹² Everyculture, “Mingrelians – Settlements,” n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Russia-Eurasia-China/Mingrelians-Settlements.html>

²¹³ Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (New York: Odyssey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 240.

²¹⁴ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 54.

²¹⁵ Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus*, (New York: Odyssey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 185.

²¹⁶ Everyculture, “Svans – Orientation,” n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Russia-Eurasia-China/Svans-Orientation.html>

group of dwellings within a larger clan structure.²¹⁷ Svans are a proud people, and vendettas between feuding families remain today.²¹⁸

Rural Economy

According to 2005 estimates, approximately 11.5% of land in Georgia is arable.²¹⁹ Farmers in Georgia produce a wide variety of crops that grow in the sunny subtropical climate of the western lowlands. Georgia's agricultural diversity has been key to the country's economy.²²⁰

Citrus fruits and tea thrive in Georgia's western region, while the central highlands are more suitable for barley and oats. Eastern Georgia is renowned for its wine.²²¹

Important commercial crops include sugar beets and tobacco.²²²



© Erin Bourgois
Ordering food in Georgia

Although only a small portion of land is suitable for agricultural production, non-agricultural land may be used for grazing livestock. The lower valley provides pasture for milking cows and goats, producing enough milk to make cheese both common at the dinner table and a major export for the country. The highlands at the edge of the mountains are suitable for beef cattle and sheep.²²³ Herders raise their livestock on separate pastures during the summer and winter months. In addition to traditional livestock, the raising of bees and silkworms also contributes to the rural economy.²²⁴

Rural Transportation

Much of Georgia's transportation infrastructure is in disrepair. Less than 40% of roads are paved, and even those are not always easily navigable.²²⁵ The country's 1,600 km (1,000 mi) of railway lines are also in need of maintenance. Because of poor roads and limited train access, some of Georgia's rural areas, especially among the Caucasus Mountains, cannot be reached by modern transportation. The Svaneti region in Georgia's northwest mountains has remained largely unchanged through recent centuries because of its geographic isolation.



© Ted Botha
Truck hauling hay

²¹⁷ Everyculture, "Svans – Settlements," n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Russia-Eurasia-China/Svans-Settlements.html>

²¹⁸ Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (New York: Odyssey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 188.

²¹⁹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Georgia," in *The World Factbook*, 12 January 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html>

²²⁰ Margaret Kaeter, *The Caucasian Republics* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), 116.

²²¹ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 48.

²²² Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Georgia: Agriculture," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/230186/Georgia/44310/Agriculture>

²²³ Margaret Kaeter, *The Caucasian Republics* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), 117.

²²⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Georgia: Agriculture," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/230186/Georgia/44310/Agriculture>

²²⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, "Georgia," in *The World Factbook*, 12 January 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html>

Today it “retains a pristine medieval quality” that gives visitors a “sense of [being in a] time warp” when they enter.²²⁶

Bus and train services through the countryside are neither reliable nor do they offer great coverage. Much of the rural transportation in Georgia follows a hub-and-spoke system with T’bilisi at the center.²²⁷

The mountains dividing Georgia from the Russian Federation remain largely inaccessible. Only three major routes link the two countries, the most prominent passage being the Georgian Military Highway that begins in T’bilisi and runs along an ancient route used for many centuries.²²⁸ Activity along the road has lessened as tensions between Russia and Georgia have caused border closings.²²⁹

Health and Education

Health care is sparse outside of Georgia’s major cities.²³⁰ Individual doctors and even clinics usually expect immediate payment in cash. The poor, many of whom live in rural areas, are therefore less likely to seek medical care.^{231,232}



© Rita Willaert
Elderly Georgian woman

Exchange 37: Is there a medical clinic nearby?

Official:	Is there a medical clinic nearby?	aak aaKhlos saameditseeno kleeneekaa aaRees?
Local:	Yes, over there.	kay, ay ayk

Georgians value education; even students in rural areas generally have access to schools.²³³ The historic emphasis on education and the large number of schools in both urban and rural areas have contributed to the country’s 100% literacy rate.²³⁴ Despite the value traditionally placed on

²²⁶ Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (New York: Odyssey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 185.

²²⁷ Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (New York: Odyssey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 59.

²²⁸ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 10,51.

²²⁹ Lonely Planet, “Introducing Georgian Military Highway,” 17 February 2009,

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/georgia/the-mountains/georgian-military-highway>

²³⁰ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. State Department, “Georgia – Country Specific Information, Medical Facilities and Health Information” 19 January 2011, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1122.html#medical

²³¹ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. State Department, “Georgia – Country Specific Information, Medical Facilities and Health Information” 19 January 2011, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1122.html#medical

²³² Xiaohui Hou and Shiyan Chao, “An Evaluation of the Initial Impact of the Medical Assistance Program for the Poor in Georgia,” (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2008), 15, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/IW3P/IB/2008/04/14/000158349_20080414101557/Rendered/PDF/wps4588.pdf

²³³ Margaret Kaeter, *The Caucasian Republics* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), 126.

²³⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, “Georgia,” in *The World Factbook*, 12 January 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html>

education in Georgia, economic hardships brought about by independence have reduced school funding. Many schools have old books, cancelled sports programs, and buildings in need of repair.²³⁵

Exchange 38: Is there a school nearby?

Official:	Is there a school nearby?	aak aaKhlos skola aaRees?
Local:	Yes.	kay

Exchange 39: Do your children go to school?

Official:	Do your children go to school?	tkweni shvilebi daadeeyaan skolaashee?
Local:	Yes.	kay

Daily Life in the Countryside

Georgia’s rural workday is scheduled around farming and offers less free time than in the cities. The father will likely tend to the crops or the animals. The mother primarily manages the home, which includes cleaning, cooking, and taking care of children. She may also help around the farm.²³⁶ Many of Georgia’s rural areas, especially in the mountainous provinces of the north, lack modern technology.²³⁷



© Mikheil Samkharadze
Wild horses

The high and rugged Greater Caucasus range appeals to international and local climbers.²³⁸ In Svaneti, Georgia’s northwest mountain area, mountain climbers are well-regarded. Hunting is also highly esteemed.²³⁹ Sports such as soccer and rugby are common throughout Georgia, but the country also has its own unique take on several sports. Georgian wrestling is part dance and is performed to music. Georgians also play a game, known as *tskhenburti* that is similar to polo and played on horseback.²⁴⁰ Playing chess is a popular non-athletic activity in Georgia.²⁴¹

²³⁵ Margaret Kaeter, *The Caucasian Republics* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), 126.
²³⁶ Margaret Kaeter, *The Caucasian Republics* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), 124–128.
²³⁷ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 63.
²³⁸ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 103.
²³⁹ Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (New York: Odyssey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 188.
²⁴⁰ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 104–105.
²⁴¹ Michael Spilling, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 105.

Who's in Charge

Georgia has a strong feudal past and much of the hierarchy of that system has endured to modern times.²⁴² Village elders, especially in Georgia's mountain regions, have had an important role in local government for centuries. Traditionally, a village assembly chose a headman for the village who was responsible for village administration. Soviet administration in the 20th century reduced local autonomy, but some vestiges of the old system led by village elders survived through independence in the early 1990s. As the country emerged from its long years of foreign rule, tribal traditions became entrenched in local leadership, and ethnic prejudice caused further tension with the state.²⁴³



© Henning / flickr.com
Sheppard in Truso valley

Important communal networks, known as clans, drive a large portion of the political system in Georgia. While not based entirely on kinship lines, Georgian clans value the loyalty of personal friendship and center on strong leaders. Resulting “clannishness” is often cited as a stumbling block to modern democratic norms.²⁴⁴ Representatives of regional or family clans are in many cases the driving force behind local political parties and government.²⁴⁵

Exchange 40: Does your village leader [tavkatsi] live here?

Official:	Does your village leader [tavkatsi] live here?	tkweni soplis tavkaatsee aak tsKhovRobs?
Local:	Yes.	kay

Exchange 41: Will you take me to your tavkatsi?

Official:	Will you take me to your tavkatsi?	sheygidzleeyaat soplis taavkaatstaan tsaamikvaanot?
Local:	Yes.	kay

²⁴² George Otxmezuri, “Administrative Status and Ethnic Composition of Shida (Inner) Kartli (according to historical sources),” n.d., 2, <http://www.harrimaninstitute.org/MEDIA/01396.pdf>

²⁴³ David Lasaberidze, Konstantine Kandelaki, and Niko Orvelashvili, “Local Government in Georgia,” in *Developing New Rules in the Old Environment: Local Governments in Eastern Europe, in the Caucasus and Central Asia*, ed. Igor Munteanu and Victor Popa, (Central European University Press, 2003), 269–271, <http://lgi.osi.hu/publications/2001/84/Ch5-Georgia.pdf>

²⁴⁴ Ghia Nodia and Álvaro Pinto Scholtbach, “The Political Landscape of Georgia: Political Parties – Achievements, Challenges and Prospects,” OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2006, 76–77, <http://www.pasos.org/content/download/11032/75262/file/The+Political+Landscape+of+Georgia.pdf>

²⁴⁵ David Lasaberidze, Konstantine Kandelaki, and Niko Orvelashvili, “Local Government in Georgia,” in *Developing New Rules in the Old Environment: Local Governments in Eastern Europe, in the Caucasus and Central Asia*, ed. Igor Munteanu and Victor Popa, (Central European University Press, 2003), 275, <http://lgi.osi.hu/publications/2001/84/Ch5-Georgia.pdf>

Border Crossings and Checkpoints

The Georgian military patrols areas near the Pankisi Gorge, a two-and-a-half-mile-wide gorge that runs eight miles along Georgia’s border with the Chechnya region of the Russian Federation. The region hosts refugees and has remained one of the most lawless areas in the entire country. In 2002 the United States sent Special Forces advisors to train the Georgian military in the area.²⁴⁶ Checkpoints in the region are common.²⁴⁷



© Onnik Krikorian / Oneworld Multimedia 2009
Georgian checkpoint

Exchange 42: Where is the nearest checkpoint?

Official:	Where is the nearest checkpoint?	saad aaRis waaKhlo-esi blokpostee?
Local:	Two kilometers from here.	aakeydaan oR kilometRishee

Exchange 43: Is this all the ID you have?

Guard:	Is this all the ID you have?	piRaadobees sKhva motsmobaa aaR gaakvt?
Driver:	No.	aaRa

Checkpoint officials are wary of travelers carrying weapons. Georgia has a large black market for firearms sales, adding to the lawlessness of the Pankisi Gorge.^{248,249}

Exchange 44: Are you carrying any guns?

Guard:	Are you carrying any guns?	yaRaghee gaakvt?
Driver:	No.	aaRa

²⁴⁶ Shorena Kurtsikidze and Vakhtang Chikovani, “Georgia’s Pankisi Gorge: An Ethnographic Survey,” Working Paper/3–4/(Berkeley, CA: Program in Post-Soviet Studies, Spring 2002), http://bps.berkeley.edu/publications/2002_03-kurt.pdf

²⁴⁷ Giorgi Sepashvili, “Pankisi Gorge – A Criminal Enclave,” Civil Georgia, 17 January 2002, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=1041>

²⁴⁸ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. State Department, “Georgia: Country Specific Information – Crime,” 19 January 2011, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1122.html#crime

²⁴⁹ Margaret Kaeter, *The Caucasian Republics* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), 118.

Travelers entering Georgia from Turkey may be subject to extensive customs inspections. In early 2011 the two governments agreed to measures designed to simplify border-crossing procedures.^{250,251} Both countries are attempting to increase trade.²⁵²



© lbán / flickr.com
Georgian - Armenian border

The border into Armenia from Georgia may be busy. Armenia's border with Turkey is closed, so Turkish trucks often enter Armenia by way of Georgia.

Georgia's border crossings with Russia are not reliable. In 2010 the Verkhniy Lars crossing of the Georgian Military Highway reopened after being closed for four years. The Verkhniy Lars crossing is an important passage for Georgia as the other two routes into Russia are in the conflict-riddled areas of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.²⁵³ Despite the reopening, tensions remain high, and the border is subject to closing. International travelers will likely not be allowed to enter Russia through Georgia.

Georgia has had some border disputes with Azerbaijan that date back to vague border policies during the Soviet era.²⁵⁴ Official border crossings between the two countries are straightforward and only require typical paperwork including passports and vehicle registration.²⁵⁵

Exchange 45: Show us the car registration.

Guard:	Show us the car registration.	maankaaanis RegistRaatsees saabooti gvachvenet
Driver:	Okay.	kaaRgeet

²⁵⁰ Lonely Planet, "Turkey-Georgia Border – A Warning," 31 December 2009, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree/thread.jspa?threadID=1859636>

²⁵¹ Mzia Kupunia, "Georgia-Turkey to Simplify Border Procedures," The Messenger Online, 14 February 2011, http://www.messenger.com.ge/issues/2296_february_14_2011/2296_mzia.html

²⁵² Hürriyet Daily News, "New Mall to Open on Georgia-Turkey Border," 12 January 2010, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=new-mall-to-open-on-georgia-turkey-border-2010-01-21>

²⁵³ BBC News, "Russia-Georgia Border Crossing Reopens," 1 March 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8542746.stm>

²⁵⁴ Nino Edilashvili, "Border Dispute Breaks Harmony between Azerbaijan and Georgia," The Georgian Times, 12 April 2007, <http://www.geotimes.ge/index.php?m=home&newsid=3887>

²⁵⁵ Horizons Unlimited, "Azerbaijan (from Georgia, on the Telavi-Sheki road)," n.d., http://www.horizonsunlimited.com/tripplan/borders/georgia_azerbaijan

Landmines

Landmines are a concern in some of Georgia's rural areas. The majority of the country's mining dangers lie in the Abkhazia region in the northwest. Following Georgian independence in 1991, Abkhazian leaders declared their autonomy from Georgia. The ensuing conflict resulted in the laying of tens of thousands of mines by both the Georgian military and Abkhazian forces.²⁵⁶ Many of the mines were laid by Abkhazian forces not only to create a barrier between Abkhazia and Georgia proper, but also to prevent the repatriation of displaced ethnic Georgian refugees.²⁵⁷ The area along the Inguri River (a natural border between Abkhazia and the rest of Georgia) was heavily mined; flooding in the area has threatened locals by displacing the landmines.²⁵⁸

Several areas outside of Abkhazia are also of concern. The perimeters of former Soviet military bases were mined. Although Russians gave maps of mine locations to the Georgian military when areas were transferred, those maps were proven to be incomplete.²⁵⁹ The conflict in South Ossetia in 2008 also added to Georgia's concern for landmines.²⁶⁰ The region had only limited areas that were mined prior to the conflict of 2008, but after the clash ended border areas between South Ossetia and Georgia proper were mined by South Ossetians.²⁶¹

Exchange 46: Is this area mined?

Visitor:	Is this area mined?	es aadgilee daanaaghmooleeyaa?
Local:	Yes, near the border with Russia.	kay, Roosetis saazghvaaRtaan

²⁵⁶ Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, "Georgia Country Profile," n.d., <http://www.the-monitor.org/index.php/publications/display?url=lm/1999/georgia.html>

²⁵⁷ United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs Mine Clearance Policy Unit, "Georgia – Landmines Country Report," ReliefWeb, 29 May 1996, <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/ACOS-64DGK6?OpenDocument>

²⁵⁸ Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, "Georgia Country Profile," n.d., <http://www.the-monitor.org/index.php/publications/display?url=lm/1999/georgia.html>

²⁵⁹ Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, "Georgia Country Profile," n.d., <http://www.the-monitor.org/index.php/publications/display?url=lm/1999/georgia.html>

²⁶⁰ Sahil Nagpal, "Two Georgians Killed by Landmine on South Ossetian border," *TopNews*, 18 November 2008, <http://www.topnews.in/two-georgians-killed-landmine-south-ossetian-border-290019>

²⁶¹ Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, "Georgia: Mine Ban Policy," 29 July 2010, http://www.the-monitor.org/custom/index.php/region_profiles/print_theme/356

Chapter 5: Assessments

1. According to folklore, God valued Georgian land above all other land.

True

The legend states God was so pleased to receive praise from the Georgians that he gave the Georgian people the very best land on earth—land he had intended to keep for himself.

2. After independence, Georgia continued the Soviet Union's policy of complete government land ownership.

False

Following independence, Georgia moved away from a state-planned agricultural sector and individualized the land through a combination of privatization and land leasing.

3. Ethnic Georgians are diverse both linguistically and economically.

True

Several ethnic subgroups, including Svans and Mingrelians, are recognized as "Georgian." Svans and Mingrelians speak distinct but related languages and are largely rural, residing in the northwest mountains and coastal plains respectively.

4. Georgian farmers produce a wide assortment of crops.

True

Since moving away from the Soviet one-crop system, the Georgian agricultural economy has diversified, producing tea, wine, citrus fruits, barley, oats, sugar beets, and tobacco.

5. The Georgian transportation sector is highly modernized and has become the gem of former Soviet republics.

False

Much of the country's transportation infrastructure is in a state of disrepair. Only 40% of the country's roads are paved, and some areas remain nearly inaccessible, especially in winter.

Chapter 6: Family Life

Typical Household and Family Structure

Family ties are important in Georgian culture—often three generations will live under one roof. Young, unmarried children live with their parents and a set of grandparents.²⁶² Families tend to live with relatives of the husband, although children leaving home to set up independent households are becoming more common; residing with the wife’s parents no longer carries the social stigma it once did.^{263,264} Extended families often live in close proximity to one another both in cities and in villages.^{265,266}



© Philip Litevsky
Georgian family

Exchange 47: How many people live in this house?

Official:	How many people live in this house?	aam saaKhlshée Raamdenee aadamyaneé tsKhovRobs?
Local:	Six.	ekvsee

Georgians recognize a number of familial bonds in addition to blood relations. “Spiritual” kin may not share a family line but are treated equally. Prior to the Soviet era, it was common for children to be breastfed by a wet-nurse, which created a “milk siblinghood” with the wet-nurse’s own children. The bond between these families would endure for generations. Although this practice has largely disappeared, other extra-familial bonds remain important. Two individuals may create a sworn siblinghood by cutting their fingers and mixing blood. Additionally, godparents are very important in Georgia and therefore quite common. Lifelong friends of the parents will typically be a child’s godparents. The godparents not only serve as an example of moral standards for the children but become part of the family; descendants of the parents and the godparent, now considered kin, should not marry for fourteen generations.^{267,268}

²⁶² Everyculture, “Georgians – Kinship,” n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Russia-Eurasia-China/Georgians-Kinship.html>

²⁶³ Everyculture, “Georgians – Kinship,” n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Russia-Eurasia-China/Georgians-Kinship.html>

²⁶⁴ Everyculture, “Mingrelians – Kinship,” n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Russia-Eurasia-China/Mingrelians-Kinship.html>

²⁶⁵ Everyculture, “Georgians – Kinship,” n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Russia-Eurasia-China/Georgians-Kinship.html>

²⁶⁶ Margaret Kaeter, *The Caucasian Republics* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), 129.

²⁶⁷ Everyculture, “Georgians – Kinship,” n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Russia-Eurasia-China/Georgians-Kinship.html>

²⁶⁸ Everyculture, “Mingrelians – Kinship,” n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Russia-Eurasia-China/Mingrelians-Kinship.html>

Exchange 48: Are these people [children] part of your family?

Official:	Are these people [children] part of your family?	es KhaalKhee tkvenee ojaaKhees tsevRebee aReeyaan?
Local:	Yes.	kay

When multiple generations live together or gather for family events, the elders are given great respect, and younger family members will defer to them for most decisions. The oldest male acts as the symbolic head of the family and will have the final word in family affairs. The oldest female will manage the home and direct the affairs of the other women.²⁶⁹

Family Responsibilities and the Status of Women

Masculinity in Georgia is marked by chivalry and machismo, and both are reinforced by cultural traditions. *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin*, Georgia’s national epic poem, is a constant reminder of the importance of chivalry and honor.²⁷⁰ Many Georgians can recite sections of the poem, and many of its important lessons have become Georgian proverbs.²⁷¹ The poem teaches young Georgian men that love and friendship will conquer all foes.²⁷² These values have become so entrenched in the Georgian worldview that female visitors to the country often remark on Georgian chivalry.²⁷³ Masculinity in Georgia, however, goes far beyond codes of twelfth-century chivalry; the machismo of virility and strength endure through songs and dances that popularize the acts of warriors and bandits—male figures highly revered in the country.²⁷⁴



© Vladimer Shioshvili
Woman working at a bazaar

The combination of chivalry and manliness result in a society in which women are respected but not as equals. Gender roles are clearly defined, and the concept of gender equality is not as important in Georgia as it is in many western European countries. Men view cooking and cleaning as women’s work and will seldom help with such chores.²⁷⁵ The government does not take a firm stance on the issue of gender equality, and there is evidence that spousal abuse is

²⁶⁹ Everyculture, “Georgians – Kinship,” n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Russia-Eurasia-China/Georgians-Kinship.html>

²⁷⁰ Roger Rosen, *Georgia: A Sovereign Country of the Caucasus* (New York: Odyssey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 19.

²⁷¹ Zoran Pavlović and Charles F. Gritzner, *Republic of Georgia* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002), 57.

²⁷² Margaret Kaeter, *The Caucasian Republics* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), 122.

²⁷³ Tim Burford, *Georgia with Armenia: The Bradt Travel Guide* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press Inc, 2002), 66.

²⁷⁴ Michael Spilling and Winnie Wong, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 67.

²⁷⁵ Michael Spilling and Winnie Wong, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 67.

rarely reported because of social conventions that scorn raising such issues outside of the family.²⁷⁶

Marriage, Divorce, and Birth

The Georgian Orthodox Church prohibits marriage between individuals related up to the seventh degree. This social convention for determining the degree of relation acceptable for marriage is accepted in Georgia, even outside of religious households. If two individuals share a last name, there is an assumption that they are related (it is assumed they have a high degree of “consanguinity,” meaning they have shared blood), thus marriage is taboo.²⁷⁷



© Ted Botha
Wedding, T'bilisi

Parents no longer play the matchmaking role they once did, yet the approval of parents before a marriage is still important.²⁷⁸

Although it has increased in recent decades, divorce is rare. In the mid 2000s, the divorce rate was just 6%.²⁷⁹ A divorced woman is likely to receive support from her family, but remarrying is difficult.²⁸⁰

In this male-oriented society, the birth of a boy is a great joy.²⁸¹ This reality is compounded by the fact that Georgians tend to have very small families. The birth rate in Georgia between 2002 and 2005 was 1.6 births per woman, contributing to negative population growth.^{282,283}

Exchange 49: Congratulations on your new baby!

Visitor:	Congratulations on your new baby!	baavshvis shedzenas geelotsavt!
Local:	Thank you.	maadlobaa

²⁷⁶ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. State Department, “Georgia – Country Reports on Human Rights Practices,” 25 February 2004, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27838.htm>

²⁷⁷ Everyculture, “Georgians – Kinship,” n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Russia-Eurasia-China/Georgians-Kinship.html>

²⁷⁸ Mislav Popovic, “Georgian traditions,” Traditions and Customs from all over the world, n.d., <http://traditionscustoms.com/people/georgian-traditions>

²⁷⁹ Charles F. Westoff and Florina I. Serbanescu, “The Relationship between Contraception and Abortion in the Republic of Georgia: Further Analysis of the 1999 and 2005 Reproductive Health Surveys,” Macro International Inc., August 2008, 2, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADM639.pdf

²⁸⁰ Everyculture, “Georgians – Marriage and Family,” n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Russia-Eurasia-China/Georgians-Marriage-and-Family.html>

²⁸¹ Michael Spilling and Winnie Wong, *Cultures of the World: Georgia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 67.

²⁸² Central Intelligence Agency, “Georgia,” in *The World Factbook*, 12 January 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html>

²⁸³ Charles F. Westoff and Florina I. Serbanescu, “The Relationship between Contraception and Abortion in the Republic of Georgia: Further Analysis of the 1999 and 2005 Reproductive Health Surveys,” Macro International Inc., August 2008, 2, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADM639.pdf

Family Events

Weddings in Georgia are large affairs that include both families and friends. Food and wine come in abundance as do cheer and merrymaking. The groom’s family covers the cost of the wedding.²⁸⁴



© Henning / flickr.com
Grave, T'bilisi

Wills designate the division of property after death. When death occurs without a will, inheritance laws state that children receive a division of their parent’s property. If there are no children, the property is divided among the relations closest to the deceased.²⁸⁵ The country’s Civil Code ensures that men and women receive equal inheritance rights.²⁸⁶ Small family cemeteries are common in Georgia.²⁸⁷

Exchange 50: I offer my condolences to you and your family.

Visitor:	I offer my condolences to you and your family.	veezeeyaaRebt tkvens mtsooKhaaRebas
Local:	We are grateful for your kindness.	dedee maadloba goolisKhmeRebeestvis

Despite traditional Islamic prohibitions, Georgia’s Muslim Ajarians often include portraits and non-Arabic inscriptions on tombstones.²⁸⁸ Religious passages are often read at the tomb after a person’s death.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁴ Mislav Popovic, “Georgian traditions,” Traditions and Customs from All Over the World, n.d., <http://traditionscustoms.com/people/georgian-traditions>

²⁸⁵ Everyculture, “Georgia – Marriage, Family, and Kinship,” n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Georgia.html>

²⁸⁶ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. State Department, “Georgia – Country Reports on Human Rights Practices,” 25 February 2004, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27838.htm>

²⁸⁷ Margaret Kaeter, *The Caucasian Republics* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), 120.

²⁸⁸ George Sanikidze and Edward W. Walker, “Islam and Islamic Practices in Georgia,” (Working Paper 14, University of California, Berkeley, Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies, Fall 2004), http://bps.berkeley.edu/publications/2004_04-sani.pdf

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Naming Conventions

Names in Georgia are as varied as its ethnic composition. Muslim names are common in areas where Islam has a footing, such as Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and among the country's Azeri population.

Among the country's Georgian population surnames ending in *idze* and *adze*, which mean "son of," are common, as are names ending in *shvili* ("child of").²⁹⁰ Names ending in *dze* are more common in western Georgia, while names ending in *shvili* are typical for families from eastern Georgia.²⁹¹ Mingrelians, the large Georgian ethnic group that dominates the coastal lowlands, often have surnames ending in *ia*, *ua*, and *ava*.²⁹² Additional surnames may signify aristocratic families or note a family's connection to a particular village or region. When women retain their maiden names, a common occurrence in Georgia, children take their father's surname.^{293,294} Ethnic Georgian Muslims have largely changed their family names to Turkish surnames because of the assumption that Georgian names indicate Christianity.²⁹⁵



© Barbara Kaja Kaniewska
Georgian boy

²⁹⁰ Michael Spilling and Winnie Wong, *Cultures of the World: Georgia*, (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 86.

²⁹¹ Everyculture, "Georgians – Kinship," n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Russia-Eurasia-China/Georgians-Kinship.html>

²⁹² Everyculture, "Mingrelians – Kinship," n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Russia-Eurasia-China/Mingrelians-Kinship.html>

²⁹³ Everyculture, "Mingrelians – Kinship," n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Russia-Eurasia-China/Mingrelians-Kinship.html>

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Chapter 6: Assessment

1. Extended families often live close to each other both in cities and villages.

True

Family bonds are very important in Georgia. Homes frequently house three generations, and extended families live close to one another.

2. Georgians recognize a number of spiritual kin outside of normal blood lines.

True

In the past, “milk siblinghood” bound together children breastfed by the same wet-nurse. Today blood oaths and godparents tie individuals and families together as if they were related by birth.

3. Gender roles in the home are not well defined, and fathers often do work considered feminine in other countries.

False

Gender roles are well defined in the Georgian home. Men make all major decisions for the family, and women are responsible for raising the children, cooking, and cleaning.

4. Chivalry is an important value in Georgian culture.

True

Chivalry and honor are deep-seated values in Georgia. Women visiting Georgia often remark on the chivalry they encounter, but may not discern gender inequality in the country.

5. The elderly in a home defer to their children whom they view as strong and unburdened by age.

False

The elderly in a home are revered, and younger family members will often defer to the older generation for most decisions. The oldest male is usually seen as the head of the household.

Final Assessments

1. Russia has remained disinterested in Georgia since independence.
2. Georgia's media is regarded as having the highest degree of freedom among all former Soviet Republics.
3. Georgia's economy has prospered since independence from the Soviet Union.
4. The native Georgian language is closely related to the Russian language.
5. Georgia is an ethnically diverse country.
6. Easter is the most important religious holiday in Georgia.
7. Georgian Orthodox Churches are found in a number of styles and shapes.
8. Head coverings do not need to be worn by women in Georgia's churches.
9. Christianity was brought to Georgia by the country's patron saint, Saint George.
10. Religious activity has increased since independence.
11. Any toast may be made with wine, beer, or vodka.
12. When eating *khinkali* (Georgian dumplings), the doughy top of the dumpling is discarded.
13. Wine making in Georgia is a relatively new phenomenon.
14. Shaking hands is the standard greeting among new acquaintances.
15. Georgia's national epic poem *The Knight in the Pather's Skin* is a cautionary tale advocating the importance of storing food and money.
16. Georgian education in rural areas lags behind its urban counterpart with large portions of the population remaining illiterate.
17. Gender roles in the Georgian rural home are well defined.
18. Georgian clans are influential in the local politics of rural areas.
19. Georgia has open borders and strong relations with all its neighbors.
20. Conflict in Georgia's self-declared autonomous regions has led to the laying of landmines.
21. Georgia has no higher education system.

22. Because of Georgian traditions of hospitality and home cooking, the only restaurants found in Georgia's cities serve international cuisine.
23. Georgia's black market should be avoided.
24. Despite unreliable schedules, residents of T'bilisi have many options for public transportation.
25. Petty theft is a serious problem in Georgia's cities.
26. Marriage between closely related individuals is tolerated and commonly practiced in Georgia.
27. The birth of a boy is celebrated above that of a girl.
28. Georgia's Ajarian Muslims conform strictly to Islamic conventions of death and burial.
29. The common suffix *shvili* found at the end of many Georgian names means "child of."
30. Georgian names may signify a family's geographic origin.

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